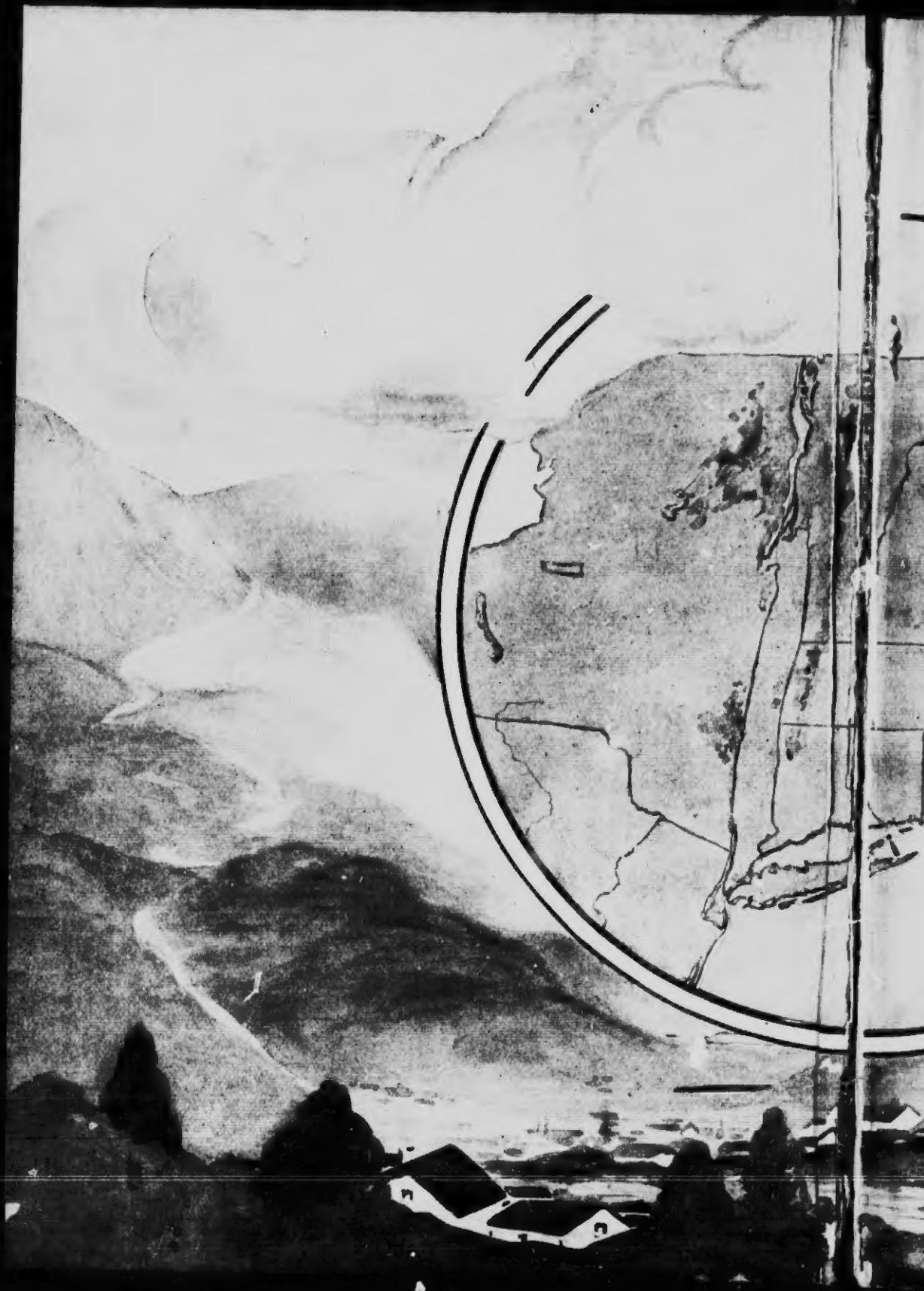




THE  
LIGHTNING  
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AMERICA

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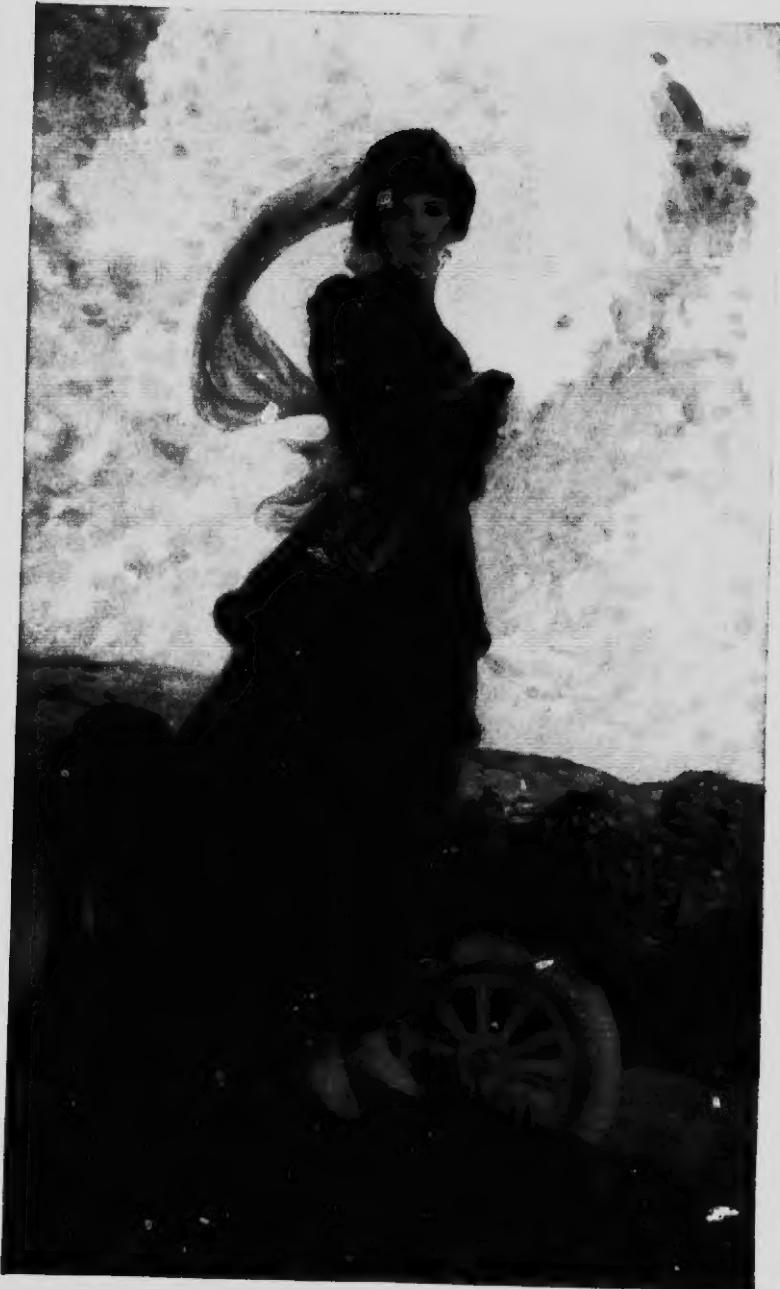
*W. M. C.*

**THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR  
DISCOVERS AMERICA**

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ROSEMARY IN SEARCH OF A FATHER  
SECRET HISTORY  
SET IN SILVER  
SOLDIER OF THE LEGION, A**





Patricia Moore

THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR  
DISCOVERS AMERICA

DANIEL WILLIAMSON



Illustrated by  
DANIEL WILLIAMSON



Portrait of a Man

# THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR DISCOVERS AMERICA

GREGORY WILLIAMSON



ILLUSTRATED

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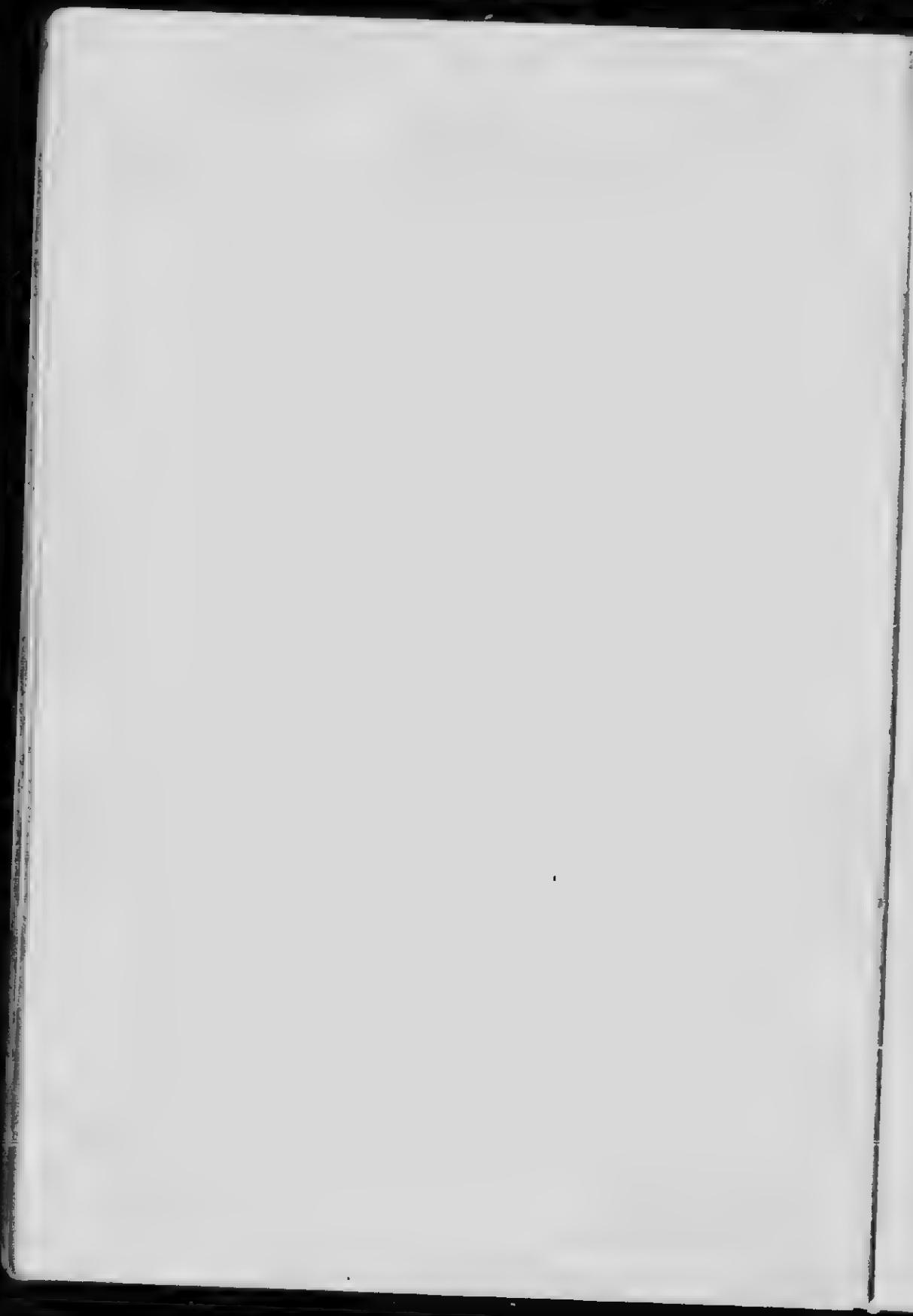
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## I

THE HONBLE MRS. WINSTON (NÉE MOLLY  
RANDOLPH) TO HER FRIEND, THE  
COUNTESS OF LANE

*On Board SS. *Evangeline*,*

*March 15th.*

DEAREST MERCÉDES:

It will be days, also nights (worse luck, for my cabin chirps like a cricket, sings like a canary, and does a separate realistic imitation of each animal in the Zoo!), before we get to New York. But I have crochet cramp and worsted wrist from finishing a million scarfs since we sailed, so I feel it will ease the strain to begin a letter to you. I dare say, anyhow, I shan't close it till the last minute, with a P. S. to say we're arriving safely—if we do! One never knows nowadays. And we have on board a man who's been torpedoed twice. I hope he isn't the kind to whom everything happens in threes. By the way, he's the Ship's Mystery, and this letter can't be a complete record of the voyage unless I tell you about him. *Place aux dames*, however. There's a girl I want to tell you about first. Or had I better polish off our own family history and make a clean sweep of ourselves before beginning on anybody else? On second thoughts, I will!

Jack's getting better splendidly. I can't say he's getting well, for that will take a long time yet, I'm sorry to—but

## THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR

no, to be an Honest Injun, I'm *not* sorry. I'm glad—*glad!* He's done his "bit"—quite a large bit—for his country, and if his bones and muscles were knitting as rapidly as I knit socks for soldiers, he would insist on rushing back to do another bit. Of course he wouldn't have consented to come over here, even for the three months I've made him (figuratively speaking) "sign on for," if the doctors hadn't all said he'd be a crock for months. Even he has to admit that he may as well crock in America as anywhere else; and I've persuaded him that I can't possibly decide what to do with the place Cousin John Randolph Payton left me on Long Island without his expert advice. It may be the first time I was ever unable to decide a thing by myself, but there *must* be a first time, you know. And I'm simply purring with joy to have Jack at my mercy like this, after all I went through with him at the front. We shall celebrate a wedding day presently. Ten years married, and I adore Jack just ten times more than I did the day I exchanged a Lightning Conductor for a husband.

He does look too interesting since he was wounded! All the girls gaze at him as if he were a matinee idol or a moving-picture star, and naturally they don't think I'm worthy of him in the least—an opinion in which I agree. Luckily, *he* doesn't. I believe he admires me as much as I do him. And really, I'm not so bad to look at, I notice, now I've begun to live again and don't need to worry over Jack every instant. I had feared it might be necessary to own up to twenty-nine, only two years short of my real age, which would be so wasteful. But thank goodness, I see now I can safely retreat in good order back to twen'y-five, and stay there for some time to come. I always did feel

that if girl or woman found a nice, suitable age, she ought to stick to it!

That's all about us, I think. So, speaking of girls, I'll tell you about the one I mentioned. I want to tell you, because Jack and I are both passionately interested and perhaps a little curious. Consequently I expect her fate and ours, as the palmists say, will be mixed together while we live on Long Island. In that case, she's sure to be served up to you toasted, iced, sugared, and spiced, in future letters, so she may as well be introduced to you now: "The Countess of Lane—Miss Patricia Moore." Nice name, isn't it? Almost as nice as yours before you were married 'o Monty. She has informed me, however, that she hates the Patricia part because it sounds as if she turned up her nose in pride of birth, whereas God turned it up when He made her—or else her nurse let her lie on it when she was asleep. Anyhow, it's tilted just right, to make her look like one of those wonderful girls on American magazine covers, with darling little profiles that show the long curve of lashes on their off, as well as their near, eyelid. You know that engaging effect?

I have been invited to call her "Patty," or "Pat," both of which names were in use at the French convent school she has lately left. But I think she will have to be "Patsey" for me, as to my mind it's more endearing. And "endearing" is a particularly suitable adjective for her. Constantly, when looking at the creature, I find myself wanting to hum, "Believe me, if all those endearing young charms," etc. There are simply *crowds* of them—charms, I mean. Big blue eyes under those eyelashes, and above them, too, for the under lashes are a special feature; clouds

## THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR

of black wavy hair; and milky-white skin such as true Irish beauties have in poems, where it's not so difficult as in real life. This girl is American, not Irish, but she's certainly the Beauty of the ship.

She is the *happiest* thing you ever saw: and apparently she's coming home (she calls it "home," though she hasn't been in America since she was ten) as a conquering hero comes marching into a blaze of glory. All the same, I'm sorry for her. I have a sort of impression—but why be a croaking raven? I really don't see why! Every prospect pleases, and there's no reason man should be particularly vile. When I allude thus flippantly to "man," I refer to Papa Moore. I suppose when one comes to analyze that "sort of an impression" the danger-note is sounded to my heart by the girl's description of her father.

Not that she calls him "father," or even "papa," or "dad." She calls him "Larry," his name being Laurence. She worships the ground he walks on, she says, which is sweet of her, as very little of it has been walked on in her neighbourhood for the last nine years.

It seems that Namma and Larry made a runaway match, when he was twenty and a half and Mamma seventeen and a quarter. He ran from college and she ran from boarding-school. Mamma was an heiress; Larry was poor. However, he had a lovely old house on Long Island (or rather his people had it) and he came into it later when the others had kindly died: a very historic old house, according to Miss Pat. She's intensely proud of her parents' romance, and the fact that Larry is at this present time only forty-one. "Of course forty-one is *old*," she explained to Jack and me, "but not for the father of a grown-up girl,

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is it? It couldn't be *done* younger! And when you meet him, you'll see—why, you'll see that I look old enough to be his mother!"

(She had her nineteenth birthday with a present of a motor car to celebrate it, just before leaving France, and she looks sixteen. So naturally Jack and I are curious to behold Larry. If her description fits, he must be rather like the father in Anstey's "Vice Versa.")

When Pat was ten, Mamma twenty-eight, and Father thirty-one, the trio went to Europe, which I think mostly meant Paris. Mamma was taken with pneumonia after an Embassy ball, at which she was the prettiest woman, and died of her triumph. Larry didn't know what to do with the child. But some sympathetic soul who wanted to save the dear boy trouble advised him to plant his little flower in the soil of France, where he could come once in a while to see how she grew. He took the advice, and Patty was planted in a convent school, where she has stayed till now, as he never seemed ready to dig her up.

Just what Larry has done with himself meanwhile is not explained in this first chapter of the romance, which is as far as we have got. All Patty knows is that he left "*important business*" to dash over twice and see her: once when she was thirteen, once again three years later. He was "*too handsome for words*," and "*the girls were all wild about him*." Since then, nothing doing—except letters and cheques. Apparently Larry was under the impression that once a schoolgirl, always a schoolgirl. Anyhow, he put off indefinitely the happy day when he could take his fair young daughter to reign over his home. The Mother Superior wrote when Pat was going to be eighteen, and

## THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR

Larry said he would come, but didn't. Patty is sure he couldn't, because "he *adores* her just as she adores him," and is dying for the time when they can be together. At last, owing to the war, all the older girls were leaving the school except Patricia Moore; so Larry's memory had to be jogged, and this time he opened his heart and sent for Pat. Dreadfully sorry he couldn't fetch her himself, but gave *carte blanche* for everything a girl could possibly want in travelling, except a father.

I told you about the high-powered French motor car. Well, there's an even higher powered French maid. She's the kind that you could describe as "and suite," without the slightest snobbishness or exaggeration, when registering your name in the visitors' book at a hotel. The car, which Larry told Pat to buy for herself as a birthday present from him, is forty horsepower, I believe, whereas I'm much mistaken if Angéle isn't about a hundred demon-power. She's geared terribly high, can "crank" herself I should imagine, and has the smartest new type of body, all glittering paint and varnish. Isn't it *nice* that her name should be Angéle? It wasn't the Mother Superior who engaged this guardian angel for Miss Moore, but the dear old Paris friend of Larry's who advised the convent in the first place. Angéle was *her* maid, taken over from a princess—an Albanian one, or something Balkanic or volcanic. The old friend is a Marquise, and my opinion is that her genius lies in finding safe harbours for incubuses (*is* there such a word, or should it be "incubi"?"). Heaven knows what explosive thing may happen if the high-powered Angéle doesn't fancy her new garage and petrol.

Besides the car and the maid, Mademoiselle Patsey is

bringing with her to America a regular trousseau for her début, which is to take place in the grand manner. She won't let me see Larry's photograph because it doesn't do him justice, and because she wants him to burst upon me as a brilliant surprise; but she has shown me as much of the trousseau as her stateroom and Angéle's can contain. The rest's in the hold, and forms quite a respectable cargo. If everything comes off as Patsev expects it to do (and after all, as I said, why shouldn't it?) I do think that she and her charm and her clothes are likely to dazzle New York. Nothing prettier can have happened there or anywhere for a long time.

By the way, did *you* ever hear of a Laurence Moore of Long Island, whose place is called Kidd's Pines? There may be half a directory bursting with Laurence Moores, but there can be only one with an address like Kidd's Pines. It's named after a clump of pines supposed to be a kind of landmark for treasure buried by Captain Kidd. Either the treasure is buried under the trees, somewhere between their roots and China, or the pines point to it. Can pines point? I don't see how they can, any more than a pumpkin can point; but perhaps nobody else being able to see is the reason why the treasure's never been found.

We haven't many young men on board. Most of the young men who travel are going the other way just now; and that makes our Ship's Mystery more conspicuous. One reason he's so conspicuous is because he's travelling third class. (We used to call it steerage!) Maybe you'll say that travelling third class doesn't usually make people mysterious: it makes them smell of disinfectants. Also it

puts them Beyond the Pale. Not that I or any other nice woman can tell precisely what a Pale is. But anyhow, if you go third class you have to show your tongue if the least important person demands a sight of it. And if that doesn't put you beyond Pales and everything else, I don't know what does.

That's why this man deserves such extraordinary credit for being interesting and mysterious. Even if caught in the act of displaying his tongue to the doctor, I believe you'd say, should you see a snapshot: "Who *is* that man?"

Now, haven't I worked up to him well? Don't you want to hear the rest? Well, so do we. For we don't know anything at all, except that if we go and gaze over the rail of the first-class part of this old-fashioned tub of a ship, into the third-class part, we can generally observe a young man who looks like an Italian prince (I mean, the way an Italian prince *ought* to look) telling the steerage children stories or teaching them games. I'm not sure if he's exactly handsome, but there must be something remarkable about him, or all the first-class passengers wouldn't have begun asking each other or the ship's officers or even the deck stewards on the first day out, the question I suggested: "Who *is* that man?"

I believe, by the by, it was a deck steward I asked. I've always found that they know everything. Or what they don't know they cook up more excitingly than if bound to dull facts.

I added to the question aforesaid—"Who *is* that man?"—another: "And how *does* he come to be in the steerage?" It was the second question which got answered first.

"I suppose, my lady"—(Whiffitts will anticipate the far future by calling me "my lady")—"that all his money was torpedoed."

This explanation raised such a *weird* picture (can't you see the thing happening?) that Whiffitts was obliged to begin at the beginning, and not stop till he came to the end, my eager look a prophesied mine of half-crowns.

Whiffitts simply loved telling me. It is nice knowing something somebody else doesn't know and is dying to! The name of the Ship's Mystery is supposed to be Storm, Peter Storm. I say "supposed," advisedly. Because it may be *anything*. They don't worry with passenger lists for third-class people; they're just a seething, nameless mass, apparently. But anything remarkable bubbles up to the top, as in the case of the alleged Peter Storm. Naturally, his fellow-passengers have nicknamed him "The Stormy Petrel."

What is he really? we wonder. A jewel shines more brightly at night, and perhaps it's the contrast between the Stormy Petrel and those "fellow-passengers" of his which makes him look so very great a gentleman, despite the fact that his clothes might have been bought at a second hand—no, a fourth or fifth hand—shop. The creature wears flannel shirts (he seems, thank heaven, to have several to change with, of different colours) and they have low, turnover collars. Apparently all his neckties were torpedoed with his money, for he never sports one. Instead, he ties himself up in red or black silk handkerchiefs, very ancient and faded; and if you will believe me, my dear girl, the effect is most *distinguished!*

I told you that he looks as an Italian prince ought to

look and seldom does; but he claims American citizenship. He sailed from New York in the *Lusitania*, and was among those saved. Far from advertising this adventure, the hero of it would apparently have kept silence if he could; but it leaked out somehow in Ireland, Whiffits doesn't quite know how. In any case, at the time of taking passage on the *Arabic* back to America, months later, paragraphs about the man's *Lusitania* experience appeared in the papers. He was catechized at the consulate when trying to get a passport for the United States, and it came out then that there was no Peter Storn on board the *Lusitania*. Our Mystery explained, however, that in the third class there was a passenger registered as "Peter Sturm." The name, according to him, was spelled wrongly at the time. Nobody has since contradicted this statement, so it has been given the benefit of the doubt. Once more the man's luck bobbed up on board the *Arabic*, where he was saved again, and behaved well, rescuing a lot of people. What he did in that way on the *Lusitania* isn't known; but the searchlight of fame was turned full upon him after the *Arabic*, and has never ceased to play around his head. By the by, the said head was wounded in the *Arabic* affair, and bears a scar which runs down over the left temple and is rather becoming. Also he got pneumonia from exposure, and lay dangerously ill for some time. Several persons whose lives he saved wanted to give him money, but he refused to accept. He was nursed at a hospital in Ireland, and when he grew strong enough he found work, in order to pay his own way to America. What he is going to turn his hand to over there he doesn't seem to know, or won't tell.

We have a real live millionairess on the *Evangeline* an American millionairess from the West somewhere, a Mrs. Shuster. She's a widow, about forty-five, common but kind. For "two twos" I believe she would adopt the Stormy Petrel. She's been in Switzerland, where people used to go to eat chocolate and see mountains, and where they now go to make proposals of peace. I believe she made some, but nobody listened much, so she came away disappointed and fiercely determined to do good somewhere or know the reason why! She's a stout, wildly untidy woman whose mouse-coloured hair is always coming down, though it's freely dotted with irrelevant tortoise-shell combs; and whose elaborate clothes look somehow insecure, the way scree does on the side of a mountain. Her ideas leap out of her brain like rabbits out of holes, and then go scuttling away again, to be followed ineffectively by others: and her latest is benefiting the Ship's Mystery. She's sure he can't be American, because Americans don't have eyes like wells of ink, and short, close black beards like those of English or Italian naval officers. Her theory is that he's a subject of some belligerent country, who has conscientious scruples against fighting. The fact that he sailed from New York on the *Lusitania* last spring can't convince the lady that she is wrong in her "deductions," as Sherlock Holmes would say. It only complicates the mystery a little and adds ramifications.

To my mind, Mr. Storm hasn't at all the look of a man opposed to fighting. I believe he would love it. The odd thing to me is, where there's such wide opportunity on one side or the other, that he isn't doing it. And Jack thinks so, too. I do hope he isn't a spy or an anarchist, or a person

who takes passage on ships to blow them up or signal to submarines or something.

Of course I haven't suggested such horrors to Mrs. Shuster; and yesterday she made up an exploring party for the steerage, so as to open communications with the desired protégé. The first officer had promised to take her, and she asked me to join them. I happened to be talking to Patsey Moore at the time, and saw by the way her eyes lighted that she was dying to go, too. So I got her included in the invitation.

It was a lovely calm day, the long level lines of the sea punctuated with porpoises, dear things like giant commas. A good many of the third-class passengers were writing letters on their knees, and the *quaintest* paper. Among these was the Man of Mystery; and Mrs. Shuster sailed up to him, billowing out in the breeze of her own enthusiasm.

"We've all heard of you," she said. "And the splendid things you did on the *Arabic*."

Actually the man blushed! He rose up politely; and as he is very tall and straight, rather thin, and extremely dark, he reminded me of a cedar towering beside one of those squat Dutch trees cut into the shape of some domestic animal.

"I really did nothing," he protested, with that guilty redness spreading over his olive face, and making him more mysterious than ever. *Because he had the air of being found out in something.* And the blush began before Mrs. Shuster got as far as mentioning the *Arabic*. It was more as if he were afraid she had met him before and recognized him.

"Well, other people are better judges of that than your-

self," the dear lady contradicted him. "I, and a lot more first-class passengers, feel it's a shame you should be here. We want you to be up with us and—and telling us all about your adventures. The favour wouldn't be from us to you, but the other way round, if you accepted the price of a cabin. We're sure you're a gentleman——"

At that it was Patsey's and my turn to blush! It was such an awful thing to say to the man, though the poor woman meant so blunderingly well. P. and I were in the background—an easy place to be, because there's so much of Mrs. Shuster. We weren't even a chorus, because we hadn't made a sound or a gesture, and didn't intend to make one. But the colour effect was unrehearsed and unavoidable. I felt a regular blush of red to the head, as I used to say when I was small, and Pat grew scarlet as if she'd been suddenly slapped. I expected to see the forked lightning of scorn dart from those immense dark eyes of Storm's: but instead they crinkled up in an engaging smile. One glance the man gave Pat and me, against his own will I think: but it was a spontaneous combustion of his sense of humour. It struck a spark to ours, and I dared to smile also. Pat didn't quite dare, but looked relieved, though still evidently scared about what might come next, and intensely, painfully interested.

"Thank you very much," said Mr. Storm. "I'm afraid you flatter me, madam. I make no such pretension. It's kind of you to think of promoting me, but this is my place. I shouldn't feel at home going first class, I assure you. I haven't either the manners or the clothes to make me comfortable there."

"Why, I think your manners are *beautiful*," that miser-

## THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR

able millionairess assured him, while my mouth felt dry, and I'm sure Patsey's became arid as the Libyan Desert.

"We'll all risk that, if you'll come and entertain us with stories of your adventures. As for clothes, I can take up a collection for you from among the gentlemen of the first class. A shirt here, a coat there. They'd be delighted."

"Thank you again," responded the victim, still smiling. "But I should be—a misfit. And I haven't a story worth telling. I'm no Scherezadé. I'm very grateful for your interest, madam, but my best way of showing it is to stay where I am—and where I belong."

"You're ever so much too modest," the unfortunate lady persisted. "Isn't he, Mrs. Winston?"

I prickled all over like a cactus. "I think Mr. Petrel—I mean Mr. Storm—can decide for himself better than we can," I stammered.

He looked at me, and then beyond me at Pat. "I'm really grateful," he repeated.

Even Mrs. Shuster understood that the rare plant preferred to remain in the kitchen garden with the vegetables, and that she could not uproot it.

"Well," she said reluctantly, "I'm sorry you feel that way. But do let me do *something* to—to show my appreciation of your gallant conduct on the *Arabic*. You're evidently a man of education. I see that, in spite of all you say. It isn't true, is it, that you're an American?"

"Quite true, madam," he answered coolly. "Do I speak like a foreigner?"

"Not like a *foreigner*, exactly. But—well, I don't

know. I must take your word for it. I guess, though, you've spent a good deal of time in other countries?"

"I've been here and there," he admitted. "I had the craze for travel in my blood as a boy." As he spoke, he smiled again, as if at some odd memory.

"I dare say you know several languages?" suggested Mrs. Shuster.

"Oh, I've picked up Russian—and a little French, and Italian, and Spanish."

"You ought to get quite a good position, then."

"I intend to try."

"But they say it's almost impossible to find work anywhere now, without influence," she went on. "Have you got influence?"

"None whatever, madam."

Her face brightened. She'd have been bitterly disappointed if he had answered differently! "Well, we'll see what I can do for you on land, since you won't accept anybody's assistance on water," chirped the benefactress. "With your knowledge of languages, you might help me in my Propaganda." (The way she spoke that word spelt it with a capital.)

The Stormy Petrel flushed up again, whether with annoyance or embarrassment or a mad desire to laugh, I couldn't decide. He murmured that she was very kind, but that he wouldn't trouble her. She must have many people to look after, and he would be all right in one way or another. He wasn't afraid.

"No, indeed, I'm sure you're never afraid of *anything!*" protested Mrs. Shuster, breathless with enthusiasm. But at this moment the officer who was our guide felt that the

limit had been reached, even for a millionairess. He hinted that there was more to see of third-class life, and moved us on when our leading lady had offered a royal handshake to the steerage hero. She would no doubt have pinned a V. C. on his breast if she had had one handy, but was obliged to content herself with screaming out reassurances as we were torn away: "I won't forget you. I shall see you again, and suggest something *definite*."

Of course we didn't want to see more third-class life but we had to pretend to. We saw where the poor dears (Mrs. Shuster called them poor dears) slept and bathed (if at all) and ate. After a boring ten or fifteen minutes we were returning by the way we had come, when a sheet of paper blew along the deck. It made straight for me as if asking to be saved, and I saved it; otherwise it would have fluttered into the sea.

Somebody had just begun writing on the paper with one of those blue indelible pencils such as soldiers use in the trenches. There were two or three lines along the top of the page, and they jumped right at my eyes, though of course I didn't mean to read them—"in case you don't get the wireless. You must see him and make him understand that this can't go on. Men rose from the dead in old days. What has been done before can be done again. Warn him that—"

There the sentence broke off.

I was thrilled. It was as if a door suddenly flew open in front of a dull house in a slummy street, to show for an instant a scene of splendour, and then slammed shut on your prying nose.

Of course I *knew* the paper was Storm's, and the hand-

writing his (a strong, educated hand) because there simply wasn't anybody else in that crowd capable of it. But, as I told you, several of the steerage passengers were taking advantage of the smooth weather to write letters; and, as it happened, our Mystery was no longer engaged in writing. He'd stuffed his pad and pencil into a pocket of his awful coat when the good ship Shuster first bore down on him under full sail. Now, on our return, he was standing at some distance pointing out porpoises to passengers and rather conspicuously not seeing us. I couldn't yell, "Mr. Storm, you've lost part of a letter you were writing!" But I thought it was the sort of letter he wouldn't want knocking about, so I said in a loud voice to our attendant officer, "Oh, somebody has dropped a sheet of paper with writing on it!"

I expected Storm to start dramatically, feel in his pocket, and perhaps claim his property with a keen glance at my face to see whether I had read anything. I intended of course to put on what Jack calls my "rag doll expression," one which I find most useful in social intercourse. But the man didn't start. He could not have helped hearing my siren hoot, but he never turned a hair or anything else. He went on pointing out perfectly irrelevant porpoises. I had to admire his nerve! For instantly I seemed to read the inner workings of his mind, and understood that he'd deliberately decided not to claim the paper. He guessed that I'd read the exciting words, and his mental message to me was: "Do what you like, my dear madam, and be d—."

I called out again for "hom it might concern, "Somebody's 'ost part of a letter!" but no one took any interest

in the announcement, so I added, with an eye on the back of the Mystery's neck, "Well, I suppose there's no use keeping it." I crumpled the paper into a ball, and tossed it over the rail where it couldn't be missed by the eye of Mr. Storm.

"He'll be glad to know I'm not showing it about, or brooding over it like a bit of a jigsaw puzzle," I thought. But the eye I wished to catch remained glued to the porpoises, and only they could tell whether it darkened with dread or twinkled with suppressed laughter. Even Mrs. Shuster hadn't the "cheek" to try and attract the man's attention, and we returned to our own class thanking our conductor for "all the interesting things he had shown us." I wondered if he knew that while we spoke in plural we thought in singular!

"The *dreadful* old lady will never let go of that poor fellow till she's ruined all the romance, and made him a respectable paid propaganda or something!" sighed Patsey Moore when we were tucked into our deck chairs once more.

I laughed, but saw that she was quite serious, almost tragic. One of her charms is her funny English. She's lived in France and talked French so long that she has to translate herself into English, so to speak; and sometimes she has the quaintest conception of how to do it. Also she rolls her "rs"; and if the Mystery had heard himself alluded to by her as a "pr-r-opoganda" he would never have forgotten it. As for Mrs. Shuster—she mightn't have minded the Maxim gun of that long-drawn "d-r-r-readful!" but her very vitals would have melted over the "old lady." Despite her largeness and oddness of appearance generally,

she considers herself a young widow, with a personal fascination beyond that of her banking account. I, with the mellow leniency of—let me see?—twenty-six, find this pathetic. But Patsey on the sunny slope of nineteen can't even envisage my viewpoint. For her, a woman over thirty is middle-aged. When she's forty she is old, and there's an end of it. How much the poor baby has to learn! I hope she won't do it in being outrivaled with her best young man some day, by a dazzling siren of forty-five who knows all the tricks of the trade and looks younger than any respectable woman ought to look at half that age!

*March 19th.*

I was interrupted there, and I seem to have done nothing else but be interrupted ever since, either by big bumpy Mrs. Shuster, or some one, or else by big bumpy waves which make me want not to write letters. At this moment Patsey is calling "Oh, do come and look at the Statue of Liberty! I thought I remembered her twice that size and twice as handsome!"

Dearest Mercédes, I must go at once and browbeat Jack (who's never seen the lady you know) into admiring her at pain of losing my love.

Ever your affectionate

MOLLY.

## II

### THE HONBLE MRS. WINSTON TO HER FRIEND THE COUNTESS OF LANE

*Awepesha, Long Island,*

*March 21st.*

You dear, to send us such a nice expensive cablegram! We found it waiting when we arrived. Of course the name of the place limped out of England hopelessly mutilated. But how could a British telegraph operator be expected to spell Awepesha? The name is more American than the United States, being Indian; and meaning "it calms." Belonging to Long Island, it is Algonquian of course. Don't you think that rather a nice name for a place on a shady shore by quiet waters, where fierce winds never blow, and soft mists often make you look at the world as through an opal? It's an appropriate name, too, because poor Cousin John Randolph Payton, who died and left Awepesha to me, built it after separating from a Xantippe wife who made his life a Nell.

Everything is sweet; and the large white house has the calmest face you ever saw: wide-apart eyes, and a high, broad forehead, under drooping green hair—elm hair. Jack loves it. He says I mustn't dream of selling, as he rather thought it would be wise to do, before he saw my legacy. Now his feeling is that even if we don't spend more than two months out of twenty-four at the place, we

simply *must* keep it for ours. You know we were married abroad, and this is Jack's first sight of anything Colonial. When I used to talk about a house being "Colonial," it left him cold. He had an idea that to the trained eye of a true Englishman "Colonial" would mean debased Georgian. But now he admits—he's a darling about admitting things, which I hear is a rare virtue in husbands! —that there's a delicious uniqueness about an American Colonial house not to be found anywhere or in anything else the world over. It is, he thinks, as if America had spiritualized the Georgian era and expressed it in terms of airy lightness unknown to the solid Georges themselves. Of course, our home isn't *quite* the real thing, but a copy. It's forty years old, whereas Kidd's Pines—but oh, my dear, that *reminds* me! You'd never believe what has happened to that poor child, Patricia Moore, whom I "starred" in my ship's letter to you. When I wrote, she seemed on the topmost crest of the wave. "Poor" was the *last* adjective I should have selected to describe her position in life.

Compared with her, *nothing* has happened to Jack and me. All we've done since I posted that letter on the dock (waiting for the kindest pet of a custom-house man) can be expressed in three words, *veni, vidi, vici*. We came, we saw, we conquered—or anyhow took possession. It's much the same thing. But Patsey! Her world has turned upside down, and Jack and I are trying with all our wills and wits to turn it right side up again. The Mystery Man is entangled in the scheme, too, in a weird way. But I must begin at the beginning, or I shall get tangled myself.

Pat put on a smart Paris frock to land in, and meet "Larry": also hat. She looked a dream, and felt one. Every woman did her best in the clothes line (I don't mean a pun), but Mrs. Shuster transcended us all. You can't *think* what she was like in one of the new-fashioned dresses, and a close-winged hat with a long stick-out thing behind exactly the shape and size of a setting hen. You may imagine a description of Mrs. Shuster irrelevant to Patsey Moore's fate and the entangling of the Mystery Man: but you'll see in a few minutes that this is not so. Our dear millionairess had been "making up" to Pat as well as to Jack and me a good deal, for several days before landing; and you know how Jack and I just *can't* be rude to fellow human beings and take steps to shed them, no matter how we are bored. I inherited this lack of *shaden freude* from dear father, and Jack has inherited it from me. At least, he says he didn't mind how much he hurt pushing people until I softened his heart beyond repair, and turned it into a sort of cushion for any creature needing sanctuary.

When we saw the Dove of Peace (her nickname on board) preening herself in clothes which would have made the Queen of Sheba "look like thirty cents," I was weak enough to breathe the desired words of admiration. "Gorgeous" was, I think, my adjective; and it was no fib.

The poor dear was pleased, and volunteered the information that she'd "dressed up to kill" for a particular purpose.

"It's really for my protégé's sake," she explained. "I marconied my friend Mr. Caspian to meet me. You know, *the* Caspian—Ed Caspian, who's come into the

Stanislaws' fortune. I think I've told you I know him very well?"

(She had indeed. If she'd told us once she'd told us a dozen times. I longed to say so. But one doesn't say to Mrs. Shuster the things one longs to say. She would go to bed and die if one did.)

"I've wired him to meet me at the boat, because I thought I'd interest him in brave Peter Storm," she went on. "That poor fellow's so quixotic he won't take favours from a woman. But he can't refuse a helping hand from a man like Ed Caspian."

"Have you told Mr. Storm what you're going to do for him?" I ventured to inquire.

"Not yet," said Mrs. Shuster, slowly and conspicuously covering with gloves a pair of hands more ringed than Saturn. "I thought I'd surprise him. You see, he's persuaded the authorities that he's an American (though you know what *I* think!), so he's no emigrant, but a returning citizen of the United States. That's what his passport makes him out to be. I've seen it. I asked to. He'll be getting off the ship with the rest of us, and I shall just say, 'Mr. Storm, I want you to have a little talk with Mr. Caspian, the great social philanthropist.'"

"I see!" I responded inadequately. "But I thought, judging from the newspapers, that Mr. Caspian had—er—turned over a new leaf since he tumbled into all that money."

(You've read, I suppose, *Mercédes mia*, about the change in the White Hope of the socialists when suddenly he found himself the tenth richest man in America? I'd never met him myself, till the day of our landing: I've

been on the other side of the water so much since Jack and I were married and father died. But one has often heard of Ed Caspian, the "gentleman socialist," the shining light of settlement workers. And since this money came to him several friends have written that it was sad—or funny, according to the point of view—to see how he'd altered.)

"It's only the gutter papers that print those horrid stories," Mrs. Shuster reproached me. "Why, they say things against *Me* sometimes! They say all I do is for self-advertisement. Did you ever hear such a wicked lie? But we Public Characters have to put up with a lot. It's our martyrdom. *I* know Ed Caspian through and through. At one time—" (she blushed and bridled as only a fat woman with two or three chins can bridle, and I understood what she wished me to understand, though Ed Caspian can't be more than thirty-two, and she's perhaps forty-five)—"at one time—oh, well, he was a poor young man with noble principles, and I'm always interested in such. My poor husband left me free to do as I liked at his death, and I was able to help several institutions Mr. Caspian was working for. I've been in Europe since he got his money; but I have perfect faith in him. He's richer than I am now, by a long shot, but he used to say he'd do anything to prove his gratitude. It's up to him to prove it to-day. I sent him a long telegram from Sandy Hook, and, by the by, mentioned you and the Honble Captain Winston."

Jack is attacked with acute goosefleshitis whenever she calls him that, but I think it's pathetic, she relishes the word "Honourable" so much, and makes it sound round

and fat in her mouth like a big chocolate cream. Of course, Jack and I are quite *nobodies*; but it did occur to me when in the same breath she said, "Ed would do anything," etc., and "I mentioned you," that Mr. Caspian might know about Jack's father; and that he might find it better worth while bothering to meet Lord Brighthelmston's son than merely to prove his gratitude to a benefactress no longer needed.

Well, anyhow, the not very good ship *Evangeline* steamed slowly to her wharf at an early hour of the morning, and Patsey Moore and Mrs. Shuster were two of the most excited people on board. Jack and I expected no one to meet us, because purposely we had let no one know. So we were not desperately emotional for our own sakes. But we were for Pat's.

"In a minute we'll see Larry!" she kept exclaiming. And her cheeks were like roses and her eyes like sapphires—literally, sapphires.

We all gazed at the welcoming, waving crowd; but as the mass individualized into faces, male and female, there was nothing admirable enough for Larry. Pat gave up hope almost as willingly as a lioness in the Zoo would give up her food at half-past feeding time. But at last she had to bow to the inevitable. Larry had not materialized. She was in "M" and we were in "W," so we couldn't do as much for her as we should have liked, and for a while had to leave her to the tender mercies of her maid. It was a relief to my mind, therefore, when I saw Mrs. Shuster introducing a man—Mr. Caspian I had no doubt—to the girl. Hurrying back to "S," she saw me peering out from "W" and flew to me, breathless.

"He came, you see!" she panted. "Dear fellow! He's just the same. Not one bit spoilt. But oh, what do you think he's told me—about Miss Moore's father?"

"Not dead?" I breathed.

"Worse!" She stopped to pant some more. I could have shaken her.

"Don't keep me in suspense," I begged. But the lady's eyes had lit upon her protégé. "There's Peter Storm!" she exclaimed. "I've been watching for him. I was afraid he might get away without seeing me."

He certainly was in the act of getting away, though I wasn't so sure about the rest. "Mr. Storm!" she cried. "Mr. Storm!"

He was forced to turn. Mrs. Shuster beckoned. He came toward us, though not with the long strides which had been leading him in another direction. He took off his cap, bowed gravely, and murmured something about having a man to meet.

(Jack was absent on leave, searching for some one to look at our trunks.)

"Oh, Mr. Storm," said his guardian angel, "I wouldn't have missed you for anything. But I was afraid you might have misunderstood my message. I've sent for a very important man, a great friend of mine, to introduce you to—Mr. Ed Caspian. He won't be long now. But when I mentioned Miss Moore, the young lady on the ship, and pointed her out to him, he told me the most dreadful news about her father. The poor man is absolutely ruined and bankrupt and everything else that's bad; and here's this dear child with trunkfuls of clothes and a motor car to pay duty on. Mr. Caspian was so

interested when he saw her (that shows he's as good-hearted as ever in spite of the newspapers!), and he's ready to do anything to help, even to paying all the duties."

Half-forgotten gossip hopped into my mind like a toad. Somebody had shown me a paragraph in a scandal-loving American paper about the "change of heart" Ed Caspian had undergone with his change of purse. "Oh, he can't be allowed to do anything of that sort for Miss Moore," I said quickly. "Her father must have heaps of friends who—and anyhow, *we* shall look after her. I do hope Mr. Caspian isn't telling the poor child about her father's troubles?"

"Well, he offered to break the news to her gently," confessed Mrs. Shuster, looking guilty. "I told him she was so worried about Mr. Moore not coming to the boat. I'm sure Mr. Caspian wouldn't say a word to frighten her. He's as gentle as a fawn. I always found him so. And we'll *all* do things to help dear little Miss Moore. We'll club together; I'd love to."

I hardly heard. Without a thought of answering I dashed off to the rescue of Pat. But I was conscious, as I dashed, that the Ship's Mystery had given me a look. Not a word had he spoken since Mrs. Shuster began on the subject of Patsey Moore (not that he'd had a chance), but the look was one which nobody, no matter how pre-occupied, could *help* being conscious of—it was so brilliant and so strange.

On the way to Patsey I caught sight of Jack in the distance and diverged to him. "I'll get hold of a man in a minute," he said, thinking I'd grown impatient.

## 30 THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR

"Never mind a man!" I snapped. "Never mind anything!"

"Not even your hats?" he laughed.

"Hang my hats! Oh, Jack, Pat's father's ruined, and that Caspian creature is telling her—unless we can stop him. Do come!"

Jack came. But we were too late. The roses on Pat's cheeks were already snowed under when we hurled ourselves at "M." They both turned as we came up, she and he together. I wasted only one glance on Mr. Caspian—just enough to see that he was a small man perfectly turned out by his tailor and fairly well by his Maker: all the upper part of a blond head and face rather beautiful and idealistic, the lower part not so good, might even be a rude contradiction. Then my eyes went to Pat's, which were more sapphire-like than ever, because they glittered behind tears that she'd have died rather than let fall. By not winking she had induced the tear-vessels to take back a few, and the process would go on satisfactorily, I was sure, if nothing untoward intervened.

"Have you and Mr. Winston met Mr. Caspian?" she asked, as formally as at a school reception for teaching young girls How to Succeed in Society. Her lips were white and moved stiffly, as lips do when they are cold, though the day was mild as milk. "Mr. Caspian says he knows Larry slightly, and—and—that he's in great trouble."

"I'm awfully sorry to be a bearer of ill tidings," Ed Caspian defended himself to Jack and me, "but Miss Moore was worrying—when Mrs. Shuster introduced us—because her father hadn't come to meet her, and I thought it would perhaps be best——"

Well, I won't bother you, Mercédes, dear, with all the "we saids" and "he saids." We—that is, Jack and I—soon realized that Caspian knew what he knew about "Larry's" affairs by hearsay, or from the newspapers. He was scarcely acquainted with Larry himself: had only met him at houses of mutual friends. Laurence Moore had come a regular cropper, it seemed. Things had been faring badly with him for some time "because he was no business man, and fellows were always persuading him to go into rotten things." "But we'll see him through, Miss Moore, we'll see him through," Mr. Caspian finished up. "Don't be unhappy. And I see in the papers that the fine old house is yours and can't be sold. Your father made it over to you legally, years ago. So that's all right, isn't it?"

"Have—have things been in the papers about us?" asked Pat. The tears had been put neatly back where they belonged, without one dropping out, and she looked pitifully brave—ready for anything, no matter what. She didn't know enough about the world to resent anything Caspian had said. On the contrary, she was probably thinking he meant to be kind—showing himself a good friend of Larry's and all that. Of course I realized from the first that the instant he saw Pat the man simply snapped at her. If indeed he had the intention of helping Larry it had been born in his mind within the last fifteen minutes, and whatever he might do would be for value received. Not that it was quite fair to blame him for that. With another type of man I might have thought it thrillingly romantic that he should fall in love at first sight and resolve to save the girl's father. But with Ed

Caspian it was different—somehow. You see, he used to pose as a saint, a sort of third-rate St. George, with Society for the Dragon: he was all for the poor and oppressed. I remember reading speeches of his, in rather prim language. He was supposed to live like an anchorite. Now, here was St. George turned into his own Dragon. What an unnatural transformation! He, who had said luxury was burrying the civilized world to destruction, wore a pearl in his scarf-pin worth thousands of dollars if it was worth a cent. He had all the latest slang of a Bond Street Nut. (By the way, over here when one talks of a "nut" it doesn't mean a swell, but a youth who is what they'd call "dotty" or "bunny on the 'umph' in a London music hall.) And though his eyebrows still had that heavenly arch which must have made his early reputation, the rest of him didn't look heavenly at all.

If I'd been a sensible matchmaker, I ought to have said to myself, perhaps, "Never mind, my dear Molly, beggars mustn't be choosers. Pat is, it seems, a beggar maid. You shouldn't look a gift Cophetua in the mouth. Here he is, to be had for the taking. Encourage her to take him."

But I just *couldn't!* I wanted her by and by to marry some one tall and handsome and altogether splendid. In fact, a *Man*. And if a man were a *Man*, it didn't matter whether he were a Cophetua or not. So I listened quite disgustedly as Mr. Ed Caspian answered Pat's piteous question about the newspapers, and criticised his affected accent. I think he fancied it English.

"Oh, it happens to lots of the best men," he set out to console her, "to be in the papers that way. There's

nothing in it! I shouldn't have noticed, had it been some chap I'd never heard of. And then, Kidd's Pines, don't you know! That's a famous place. There was a picture of it in the *Sunday Times*, and something about its history. I've always wanted to see the house. May I come down, Miss Moore? There might be ways I could help you—your father, I mean—if I could look around and study the situation. For instance, it might pay me—actually *pay* me (no question of obligations)—to lend money on the place enough to set Mr. Moore right with his creditors and enough over to begin again."

"I don't understand," said Pat.

"Oh, you *spider*!" said I, in my mind, also perhaps with my eyes. I refrained from saying it with my lips, however, because after all, you see, I was a new friend of Pat's and mustn't stick my fingers into the mechanism of her fate without being sure I could improve its working. Jack and I aren't millionaires, especially since the war broke out and all our pet investments slumped. That convalescent home for soldiers we're financing at Folkestone eats up piles of money, to say nothing of the Belgian refugees to whom we've given up Edencourt. There are fourteen families, and not less than seven children in the smallest, the largest has sixteen—the average is ten. Is your brain equal to the calculation? Mine isn't, but our purse *has* to be; for we've guaranteed to clothe as well as feed the lot for the duration of the war, and I hear we're keeping a shoe factory working double time. I felt that the most we could do in a financial way for dear Pat would be to pay duty on her car and clothes, and see that, personally, she lacked for nothing. Whatever Mr. Caspian's

motives might be, I dared not choke him off on my own responsibility, and Jack said not a word. So I swallowed that "spider," but just as I was choking it down and Caspian was beginning to explain his noble, disinterested scheme, Mrs. Shuster and the S. M. (for that in future please read *Ship's Mystery*) bore down upon the letter "M."

For an instant I supposed that Pirate Shuster had captured Storm as a reluctant prize, but his expression told me that this was not the case. He came willingly, had even the air of leading the expedition; and his look of interested curiosity Caspian-ward was only equalled by mine at him. Remembering vividly the strange, brilliant, and puzzling glance he had thrown to me as I left him with Mrs. Shuster, I threw him one which I hoped was as brilliant and at the same time more intelligible. What I put into it was: "You're a *man*, even if you are a mystery, so do hurry up and interrupt this conversation, which has got beyond me."

Of course, I didn't dream that he could help by word or deed, but I thought if he just hurled himself blindly into the breach it would be something. By the time Mr. Caspian could renew his offer, Larry Moore might be at hand to look after his own interests and Pat's.

Mr. Peter Storm (perhaps I've mentioned this?) is tall and has therefore very long legs—soldier legs—that is, they can take prodigious strides as if they had a redoubt or something to carry in record time. Whether my glance had lassoed him, or whether he *wanted* to be introduced to Mrs. Shuster's rich friend, I couldn't tell. Anyhow, he landed among us like an arrow shot from an unseen bow,

and "Jill came tumbling after." (By the way, "Jill" would be a lovely name for Mrs. S. I believe her real one is *Lily*.)

Mr. Caspian had to stop talking and turn to the newcomers; but before he stopped his explanation had got as far as "a perfectly businesslike arrangement: a mortgage on the place could be—"

I wondered if Peter Storm's ears were as quick of hearing as they were well shaped; and if so whether he would guess what was up, and take enough impersonal interest in a pretty girl far removed from his sphere to be sorry for her.

Mrs. Shuster's first words went far to answer that question. "Oh, my dear Captain and Mrs. Winston, Mr. Storm suggests the most wonderful plan. I was telling him more about poor Miss Moore's troubles—all I'd heard from Mr. Caspian—and it seems he knows about Kidd's Pines, dear Miss Patty's beautiful place which is her own in spite of all misfortunes." She stopped and giggled a little: then went on in a coy tone, with an arch glance at her *tu' protégé*. "I had to confess that I could never believe he was an American. But now I have to. He knows too much about America not to have lived here. He says he used to keep a winter hotel in Florida, and he knows all about the business. He thinks Miss Moore might make a fortune turning Kidd's Pines into a hotel—the right kind of hotel. Isn't it a *wonderful* idea, to help her poor father? Oh, I forgot! Mr. Caspian, Mr. Storm! I was telling you about him, Eddy."

The two men acknowledged the introduction, inapropos as it was. They were the most extraordinary contrast to one another: the important Caspian in his pluperfect

clothes, looking insignificant; the unimportant Storm in his junk-shop get-up, looking extraordinarily significant. *He*, an ex-hotel-keeper! It was a blow to mystery. Yet I didn't lose interest. Somehow I felt more.

"I shouldn't know how to keep a hotel, should I?" faltered Patsey, in her childlike voice.

"You'd have to get expert assistance," said the S. M.

"I asked Mr. Storm if he would be free to give advice, and—and perhaps do *more*," broke in Mrs. Shuster. "I've persuaded him to reconsider his first decision. He's now promised to begin over here as my secretary till he gets something better to do. And, dear Miss Patty, I'll be just *delighted* to come as your first guest, to bring you *luck*, if you approve of the idea. I haven't any home. I intended to live at the Waldorf and look around. But from what I hear, nobody need ever look farther than Kidd's Pines, if things there are managed the right way."

"I don't think Miss Moore will need to turn her wonderful old historic place into an inn," said Ed Caspian acidly. "I, too, have a plan, haven't I, Miss Moore? And with all respect to our friend Mrs. Shuster, it's just as practical and a good deal pleasanter than hers."

"Not mine, Eddy: Mr. Storm's," the lady hastened to disclaim responsibility at the first buffet.

"Ah, Mr. Storm's," amended Eddy, trying to look down on the S. M. (Have you ever seen a pet fox terrier or a dachshund with a bone, try to look down on a wandering collie unprovided with bone? Well! . . . )

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Caspian," I ventured, "but I don't see how your plan is quite as 'practical' as the other. Interest has to be paid on a mortgage, and if it can't be

paid, why it's foreclosed, both in real life and Irish melodramas where the lovely heroine has the most agonizing alternatives offered her. Suppose, anyhow, we just let Mr. Storm tell us—since he's an expert—what he means by the 'right way' of turning Kidd's Pines into a hotel. Maybe he means something very special."

"I do," replied the S. M. "I mean what is called an 'exclusive' hotel—especially exclusive in its prices. If people think it difficult to get in, they'll all fight to do so." He looked at Pat. "I hope you won't think I'm pushing," he said, "I remember Kidd's Pines when I was a boy. I thought it was the most beautiful place I ever saw. I've seen a good many since then; but I still think the same."

A little colour crept back to Pat's cheeks. "Why!" she exclaimed, evidently forgetting her troubles for an instant, as Atlas might if some one lifted up the world to ease his shoulders. "Why, do you know when I first met you, I had a feeling as if I'd seen you before somewhere—a long time ago. Did we ever meet when I was a little girl? I seem to associate you with—with my father, as if you'd been a friend of his?"

"No, I was never a friend of his," said the S. M., quietly. "He wouldn't know the name of Storm from the name of Adam."

My brain worked wildly as he made this answer. I thought—perhaps I imagined it—that he looked suddenly as stormy as his name. I remembered the sheet of paper that had fluttered to me, the day we went to visit the third class—part of a letter which, rightly or wrongly, I had attributed to Peter Storm. Could it be possible that he had known about Larry Moore's wild speculations and

other foolishnesses?—that he had some hold over Moore?—that he had wanted to send him a warning which would now be too late?

There was nothing to put such wild ideas into my head, except the sudden, really *very* odd look in the man's expressive dark eyes—a look I couldn't help associating with the talk about Laurence Moore.

"But I'm a friend of the house," Mr. Storm was going on to explain. "There was a story I read once—almost the first after I learned to read and could enjoy myself with a book. It was called 'Cade of Kidd's Pines': a great tale for boys."

"Oh, and for girls, too!" cried Pat. "An uncle of mine wrote that book. It was dedicated to——"

"I've read it!" chipped in Ed Caspian, not to be outdone by any Storm. "What fellow hasn't? I've given it away for prizes to boys in mission schools. To my mind it would be a shame to make a common hotel out of such a place as Kidd's Pines."

"I don't suggest making a common hotel," said the S. M. The two gazed at each other, the S. M. with a resolutely impersonal look, Caspian with as rude a stare as his sainted eyebrows would permit. "A good thing," thought I, "that you've reconsidered and taken Mrs. Shuster's offer, for you'd never squeeze one out of Caspian even if you'd accept it—which you wouldn't!"

While I was thinking, Jack spoke. "Shall we hold a council of war?" he proposed. "You're all interested in finding some way for Miss Moore and her father out of their troubles. We're interested, too, but we must consult Mr. Moore himself before we can decide anything

definite. For some reason he hasn't been able to come to the ship: a business reason probably. My wife and I are going to be neighbours of Miss Moore. We'll take her to Kidd's Pines, and if it's better for her to stay with us for a while we shall only be too happy. Anyhow, we invite you to Awepesha this afternoon; you, Mrs. Shuster——”

“And Mr. Storm, my new secretary?” she broke in coyly.

“Of course. We hope Mr. Storm will come and elaborate this interesting hotel scheme of his. I shouldn't wonder if there were something in it.”

“Do I share the invitation?” asked Caspian. “Don't forget that I have a scheme, too!”

“Delighted!” said Jack, making no allusion to the latter “scheme.”

When he got me alone, under pretext of going back to “W” for the examination of our luggage, we hastily counted up what money we had between us, in order to regulate Pat's affairs at the custom house without delay and without mortification to her. Even before the blow fell, she had given Jack the bills for the Paris purchases, so that he might help her calculate the sums which must be paid. “Larry always writes that he has no head for figures,” she had said, “so if Captain Winston and I know what's to be done it will save time and gray matter. All poor Larry will have to do is to hand over the right change.”

She spoke lightly of “change,” having been brought up to know little difference between pounds and pence. Even now when the blow had fallen, and fallen hard, happiness was so much more natural to her than unhappiness that

she was already cheered by our suggestions. It seemed to her that everything must soon "come right." I believe she was more anxious to comfort Larry and show him what a tower of strength she could be to him than anything else. The first thought in many girls' heads would have been: "Here's an end of my good times before they've begun!" but I'm sure there was no place in Pat's mind for her own grievances. I fancied that she'd even forgotten those dresses for the débutante who might now never "début," and the birthday car which might appropriately be named the "White Elephant." Indeed I hoped she would forget, so that Jack might pay the duty and escape protests or gratitude. But the girl had a more practical side to her nature than I'd supposed. Just as Jack and I had finished our calculations by discovering that we hadn't enough ready money to settle up with the customs for ourselves and Pat, the Stormy Petrel "hovered in the offing."

"Miss Moore asked me to find you," he said, "and ask you not to pay duty for her things, as she thinks they'd better be sold for what they'll fetch, so the Paris tradespeople may be paid without worrying her father."

"My gracious!" I exclaimed. "I never thought of that! She gave my husband the bills. I took it for granted *they'd* been paid, at least!"

"It seems not," said the S. M. "I suppose the trades-folk considered Mr. Moore's name a good one. The French have an almost pathetic faith in Americans." (I wondered how he knew that!) "But," he went on more slowly, "I should have liked to suggest to Miss Moore, if I'd dared, that she ought to stick to her car if she's going to keep a hotel. It might be useful."

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"Of course she must stick to it," Jack agreed, "and to her poor little bits of finery. We'll see to all that, and the Paris people shan't suffer. I'm afraid these custom-house chaps won't be keen on taking my cheque, as they don't know me, but later will do, perhaps. They won't make a fuss—"

"I can let you have a thousand dollars if it would be any good," said the surprising Storm, taking from a breast pocket of his cheap ready-made coat an ancient leather wallet, which looked as if it might have belonged to Cain or Abel.

"Oh, then all your money *wasn't* torpedoed!" I blurted out before I knew that I was thinking aloud. Then I blushed furiously and wished that the most top-heavy skyscraper in New York would fall on my head. But the S. M. only laughed. "It was not," he replied. "When a man hasn't much he sticks to what he's got a good deal closer than a brother. My savings and I escaped together."

This made him seem to me even more mysterious than before, if possible. A man travelling steerage, *plastered* with bank-notes! But, I reminded myself, he had a right to be Spartan if he liked: there was no crime in that, and if he'd *stolen* the money he wouldn't be likely to mention its existence, even for the sake of as pretty a girl as Patricia Moore.

I hardly expected Jack to accept the loan, but he promptly did, and when I saw how pleased, almost grateful, Peter Storm looked, a flash of intuition made clear Jack's tactics. Just because the S. M. was what he was, and wore what he wore, the dear boy treated him as

man to man. I do think men are nice, don't you? . . . All the same, for a minute I came near doing Mr. Storm an injustice. I suspected him of wanting Pat to hear what he had done: but no, on the contrary. He asked us both to promise that the matter shouldn't be mentioned to her.

"I've done nothing," he said. "I shall get my money back from you in a day or two." And he handed over to Jack ten one-hundred-dollar bills which I suppose went down with him in the *Lusitania* and the *Arabic*, and bobbed up again. I couldn't help seeing that when they came out they left his wallet as empty as the whale after it had disgorged Jonah. I did hope he had pennies in other pockets, or that his salary from Mrs. Shuster was going to begin in advance.

After my cousin died and left Awepesha to me, Jack and I decided to keep all the servants on, anyhow until we'd made our visit to America. That being the case, we'd wired to the house the day and probable time of our arrival in New York, and the chauffeur had come for us with a respectable elderly automobile which (as the estate agents say) "went with the place." The chauffeur was (is) elderly and respectable, too, evidently transferred by the fairy wand of Circumstance from the box-seat of a carriage to the wheel of a car. We took poor forlorn little Pat and pouting Angéle to Awepesha with us, instead of carrying them a mile farther on; and then, without waiting for half a glance at his new domain, Jack nobly undertook a voyage of discovery to Kidd's Pines.

What he found out there and the decision of the war council I must wait to tell you till my next letter. I do

DISCOVERS AMERICA

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want this to catch the first ship bound for England, home,  
and beauty, otherwise you'll think me ungrateful for that  
ten-dollar telegram. And I'm not—I'm not!

We both send love to you and dear old Monty.

Ever your

M.

### III

#### THE HONBLE MRS. WINSTON TO THE COUNTESS OF LANE

*Awepesha, Long Island,*  
*March 25th.*

DEAREST MERCÉDES:

I don't know whether or not I ought to take it for granted that you and Monty are hanging breathlessly on the fate of Patricia Moore; but I suppose I'm subconsciously judging you by Jack and myself. We think, talk, dream, eat, drink, nothing except her business in one form or other!

I meant to write you (about the one absorbing subject, of course) a day or two after I closed my last letter, which was a sort of "to be continued in my next" affair. But it was a case of deeds, not words. Things had to be done and done quickly. It's all rather tragic and wildly funny.

You should have seen Jack's face when he came back to Awepesha after motoring over to spy out the nakedness of the land at Kidd's Pines. It takes a lot to flabbergast Jack, as I learned when he was my "Lightning Conductor"; but he certainly did look flabbergasted this time. You know the look as well as the "feel," don't you? It makes the eyes seem wider apart and dropped down at the outer corners.

He glanced hastily about to see if I were alone. I was

still in the library where he'd left me, because I didn't want to go over the house till he could go, too: and luckily I'd found enough piled-up letters and telegrams to keep me occupied.

"It's all right," I said. "Patsey's taking a walk in the garden. She's too restless to sit still. Besides, I dare say she hoped to head you off. A wonder she didn't! But perhaps she's gone down to the water to try and catch a distant glimpse of Kidd's Pines. What has become of the adored Larry? Did you find him?"

"I did not," said Jack. "I didn't find anybody—at least at the house."

"You didn't expect to find anybody but Larry, did you?" I asked.

"I expected to find servants."

"Good heavens! aren't there any?" I gasped.

"No. Wait till I tell you what happened. There's a porter's lodge, of course, but the gate was closed when we got there and nobody came to open it. Fortunately it was only shut, not locked. We drove in. It's a ripping place, my child. This can't be compared with it. Yet there's an air of neglect over everything. That didn't surprise me much. But when I rang the bell a dozen times without getting an answer it began to seem like a bad dream. I got tired of admiring the doorway, though it's a beauty, and you'll be mad about it; so I decided to investigate elsewhere. I tried my luck at two side entrances and then at the back. Not a sound, Not even the mew of a cat. Palace of the Sleeping Beauty! Not to be discouraged, I wandered along till I found the stables—fine big ones, and a huge garage. Locked up

and silent as the grave. Farther on I discovered a gardener's house: door fastened, blinds down. I went back and told our chauffeur: Jekyll, his name is. He knew no more about Mr. Moore's affairs than we—only what he'd read in the papers; but he proposed running on to the village, and making an errand at the post-office: thought they'd be sure to be up in everything there. He bought stamps, and asked questions while he waited for change. It seems that Moore hasn't been at Kidd's Pines for a week, and yesterday there was a servants' strike. They stampeded in a body; hadn't been paid for months, but hung on hoping for the best till after the bankruptcy. Then as Moore lay low they decided the game was up."

"What a homecoming for Patsey!" I moaned. "How are we to tell her?"

"You won't have to, dear," she said. Which paid out for talking at the tops of our voices in front of a long French window which I had opened. She was standing in it.

My bones turned to water, and Jack looked as if he'd been shot for treason. But there it was. She knew! And she behaved like a heroine. She wasn't even pale, as she had been when Ed Caspian broke things gently to her.

"Please don't mind," she went on, turning from me to Jack. "I didn't mean to eavesdrop at first, but when I heard what you were talking about I thought it would be no harm to listen. It would save your telling me afterward. I don't feel one bit worse than I did. Rats leave sinking ships, don't they? I always thought it stupid of

them, because they might have to swim miles with waves mountains high. I shan't desert the ship! You've both been angels to me, but now I know that Larry isn't at Kidd's Pines just oversleeping himself. I want to go there at once to wait for him. Think, if he came home sad and tired after all his troubles, to find the house shut up like you found it, Captain Winston! Would you be so very kind as to let your chauffeur drive me home at once?"

"We can all three go over directly after luncheon," I suggested.

Can you picture to yourself, Mercédes, an American beauty rose suddenly transforming itself into an obstinate mule? You'd say it couldn't be done. But it can. I realized on the instant that unless I sent for wild horses to tear her to pieces, Patsey would start for Kidd's Pines within the next ten minutes, chauffeur or no chauffeur. To ask her mildly how she expected to get in would have been a waste of breath. The frail young creature was quite capable of breaking the beautiful door down with a mallet if no easier way offered!

My eyes and Jack's met. Without a word he rang, and sent word to Jekyll that he must be ready to start out again immediately. Doubtless poor Cousin John's well-regulated clockwork servants thought we'd lost our heads, for luncheon had already been put back for Jack's return, and now here we were proposing to go off without it! Yet no, not exactly without it. What could be taken with us we took in a basket: for man must eat and woman must at least nibble.

While I'd been giving hasty but apologetic orders, Pat had darted away in search of Angèle, who might, she

imagined, be useful in a servantless house. I don't know how much Angèle had heard or understood, but when she appeared with fire in her eye and crumbs on her lip, I thought she looked dangerous.

We didn't say much on the way to Kidd's Pines; but inside the gates, though my heart was oppressed, I broke into admiring exclamations. My dear, there's nothing lovelier in Italy or in England! I group those two countries together in my comparison because Kidd's Pines has salient features which suggest both. The general effect of the lawns and gardens round the exquisite old house is English, or would be, if they were better kept. The tall drooping elm trees and occasional willows are vaguely English, too: but the grove of umbrella pine trees crowding darkly together on a promontory like a band of conspirators might be etched against the sky at some seaside château of Posilippo. I'm beginning to find out that this combined English-ness and Italian-ness is characteristic of Long Island, where I am even a greater stranger than Patricia Moore. And yet the most winning charm, the charm which seems to link all other charms together, is the American-ness of everything—oh, an utterly different American-ness from what most people mean when they say "how American that is!" I do wish I could explain clearly; but to explain a thing so delicate, so illusive, would be like taking a soap-bubble in your hand to demonstrate that it was round. It's an effect of imagination and climate: imagination which gave graceful lightness and simplicity to Georgian models; climate which has played Puck-tricks with elms and other stately trees of England, turning them into fairy trees while

leaving the family resemblance. Why, there's something different even about the paint on those dear old frame houses in the country over here! In no other part of the world, not even in Italy, where colour is so important, could there be a yellow like the yellow paint on the ancient shingled house-front at Kidd's Pines. I suppose the white window-facings and doorway and pillars, and the green blinds, and the frame of cathedral elms, partly account for the indescribable sweetness of that yellow. I can't liken it to anything but primroses in a forest, seen in the level, secret light of sunrise.

My ecstasies cheered Patsey a little, and I emitted some of them in French, for the benefit of Angéle, who looked about as appreciative as a Mexican horned toad.

We got into the house easily enough, by sacrificing a window-pane in the kitchen and then undoing the catch. A sweet kitchen it was, or ought to have been if the servants hadn't avenged their wrongs by leaving a lot of dishes and dish towels unwashed. We wandered about, Patsey pretending to remember this or that, and really half paralyzed with fright lest she should find that Larry had committed suicide in one of the beautiful shut-up rooms. No such horror awaited us, however, and greatly relieved in our inmost minds, we came to rest in the dining-room, where Angéle was unpacking our luncheon with her hands and poisoning it with her glances.

There were chicken salad and heavenly rolls, pickles which made me feel a child again (a thoroughly American child), chocolate layer-cake, and various other things that thrilled me with pride of the United States. While Jack and I (starved) were trying not to eat too much for sym-

pathetic friendship, and Pat was trying to eat enough to please us, we heard a door slam in the distance. We started like burglars caught at a stolen feast. It couldn't be Angéle, because she was darkening the room with her presence. It couldn't be—but it *was*!

"Larry!" cried Pat, springing up, and making a dash for the door which she happened to face. We others turned to face it also, and saw coming in a delightful boy as happy as Pan—much happier than Pan would be in modern clothes.

"She must be mistaken," I thought. "This can't be a grown girl's father. It can't be a father of anything! Impossible it should be a ruined bankrupt. It must be some younger brother of Larry's who looks like him."

But no! "*Hello, girlie!*" the tall lad exclaimed, and held out his arms. Fatsey rushed into them, and was clasped. She buried her head on the boy's shoulder, and he looked at us over the top of her head, smiling. I assure you I never saw a more engaging smile, not even Pat's own—or Peter Storm's. Theirs are quite different. Pat's is childlike and winningly ignorant of life; the Stormy Petrel's is full of unexpected gleams of humour, which lighten those mysterious eyes of an Italian prince. This youth's smile at us over his weeping daughter's hat was pagan—the joyous, carefree smile of Pan.

He patted the girl's back. "Awfully sorry I couldn't meet you," he said, in a gay and charming voice, which contradicted a statement that he could be sorry about anything: the sort of voice which you know means a light singing tenor. "I've been busy," he went on, explaining

himself to us as much as to Pat, "busy winning back the family fortunes."

Pat drew herself from him to look him in the face, and beam through a few tears. "You darling!" she gasped. "I might have known it! You *have* won them back?"

"I've made a start," he modestly replied. "I'll tell you all about it. Jove! You've grown up a dashed pretty girl. We shan't make a bad-looking pair trotting around together—what? But introduce me to your friends."

Patsey did so. When the young god Pan had met us halfway and was warmly shaking hands, one saw that he wasn't quite such an ambrosial youth as he had seemed at a distance. Instead of looking twenty, he appeared at the outside twenty-eight, wavy bronze-brown hair; big, wide-open eyes of yellow-brown like cigarette tobacco; low, straight brows and lashes of the same light shade; a clever, impudent nose and a wide, laughing mouth; a pointed, prominent chin with a cleft in it. Now, can you imagine this as the description of a nineteen-year-old girl's recreant parent, a ruined bankrupt returning to a house deserted by his unpaid servants?

After his failure to meet Pat, leaving her to arrive alone and friendless (so far as he could know), with huge duties to pay and nothing to pay them with, I'd been prepared to loathe Larry. But to loathe Pan would be a physical impossibility for any one who loves the brightness of Nature. I fell a victim to the creature's charm at first glance, and I think even Jack more or less melted at the second or third.

Larry had come in hat in hand, and had burst upon us as such a surprise that we didn't notice his costume till

after we'd calmed down. When Pat had pranced round him a little in a kind of votive dance, his eyes fell upon our luncheon, and he said in French that he had the hunger of seventy-seven wolves. He then approached the table to examine the food with interest, and put down his hat. It dawned upon me only at this instant that the hat was a shiny "topper"; and as he unbuttoned a smart black overcoat and threw back a white silk muffler, lo! he was revealed in full evening dress. This at two-thirty in the afternoon! . . . "Curiouser and curiouser," as Alice remarked when she fell down the Rabbit Hole.

"I'm clothed like this," explained Larry, "because the house where I went last night to restore our lost fortunes was raided by the police, and I escaped by the skin of my teeth. Most of the other chaps were arrested, I saw in the papers this morning, but my usual luck was with me. I happened to hide in a place where they happened not to look—or, rather, there was a fellow who looked, but he was the right sort. A hundred-dollar-bill fixed up a get-away for me, but not till a couple of hours ago. Eyes turned the other way till I'd passed the danger zone. Then I taxied down here without waiting to eat, for I thought the poor girlie would be sure to come home to roost. All's well that ends well! Am I or am I not the 'smart guy?' I pulled a thousand dollars out of roulette last night at poor old Jimmie Follette's. Had only seventy-five to start with. The wheel gave me all the rest. I backed zero and she kept repeating. Raised my stakes whenever I won. See here, I've got the spoils on me—all but the hundred I had to shed—and twenty-five for the taxi. Let's gloat."

Chuckling, he emptied his pockets of gold and green-backs. He was in his own eyes and in Patty's the hero of a great adventure. "What did I tell you about Larry?" she challenged us.

When he heard about the servants, he threw back his curly head and laughed. He'd been living in town, it seemed, for more than a week. "There's such a lot of red tape they tie you up in if you go bankrupt," he explained to Jack. "Never was so bored in my life! But I kept consoling myself with the thought, 'I'm sure to bob up serenely in the end. I always have and I always shall.' Now here's this money for instance. If I can make a thousand out of seventy-five, what can't I make out of a thousand? I wish I'd gone *seriously* in for roulette before. I might have known I'd win. We'll get some more servants and begin again, for this house is our castle. 'God's in His heaven, all's well with the world.'"

"But—but, Larry dear, we owe Captain Winston heaps of money for customs duty," Pat ventured, wistfully reluctant to dash his high spirits, yet goaded by conscience. "Of course I can sell the things, but meanwhile——"

"Sell nothing!" exclaimed Larry. "Now you've come home and can sign papers, we'll mortgage the place, and then we'll be on velvet."

My heart sank, because I saw Pat in her last ditch, and presently turned out of it with nowhere else to go unless she married for money. She was in such a state of rapture at recovering Larry after all her fears, that I thought she would cheerfully consent to anything he advised, but there must have been a sensible ancestor behind the girl somewhere. "Oh, I wish we needn't mortgage Kidd's Pines!"

she sighed. "It is such a dear place. I'd almost forgotten—but such a rush of love has come over me for it to-day. I'd hate to risk losing it—and we might, you know. There's another plan that some kind friends from the ship thought of this morning, when—when we heard the news—about our trouble. They're coming to Awepesha to talk it over, at four o'clock this afternoon."

She turned an imploring glance on Jack, who thereupon felt forced to help her out with explanations. He stumbled a little, for fear of hurting Mr. Moore's pride; but he needn't have worried. Larry regarded the idea as the joke of the century.

"Great Scott, what a lark!" he shouted. "I can see the advertisements! 'Hiding place of Captain Kidd's Treasure in the Grounds.' What do you know about *that*? Jove, we'll have digging parties, with me for the leader!"

"You must make them *pay* for the privilege of digging," I suggested.

"Yes! We'll call it the 'Only Extra.' I like the idea of that man—Storm, did you say his name is?—of charging some high, almost prohibitive price which limits the scope of operation to millionaires, then letting them have everything they want, as if they were guests: champagne or water, the same charge. We ought to get some fun out of this—what?"

I thanked Billiken, the God of Things as They Ought to Be, that he took it that way, for, if only Larry didn't insist on managing the business himself, I saw hope of Pat's being saved.

Our chauffeur, looking more like Hyde than Jekyll after his long wait, took us all back to Awepesha in the

car, after Larry had changed his telltale clothes to tweeds, and the ruined bankrupt was the life of the party. His remarks about the expression of Angéle's back (she sat in front) and his friend the Marquise's taste in female beauty were most witty and amusing, if not in the best of taste.

I forgot to tell you that Ed Caspian brought his car down to the docks to take Mrs. Shuster wherever she wanted to go—a resplendent car of the most expensive make in the world, such a car as he would have called "Moloch" in the days when his hand was against Capital. Before we'd been back very long at Awepesha it arrived, bearing the lady and her host, but not Mr. Storm. He had preferred to travel independently, it seemed, and I rather liked him for it. No sooner were the introductions and first politenesses over between the newcomers and Larry, however, than Storm appeared. I had rather expected that he would "doll himself up"—as they say in this dear land of ours—for the visit in high society; but he had made no change, not even a tall collar.

Mrs. Shuster, enraptured with Larry and in an ecstasy between these three men she could think of as "in her train," presented "Mr. Peter Storm to Mr. Moore." "A hero of the *Lusitania* and *Arabic*," she added, "and going to be my secretary."

Larry held out his hand, and, as he shook the Stormy Petrel's, stared at him. "I seem to know your face," he said. "And yet—I can't place it. Do you know mine?"

"I think if I'd ever seen it I shouldn't have forgotten," returned our Ship's Mystery. I noticed that he did not say he hadn't seen it or that he had forgotten. And I

vividly recalled how Pat, too, had had the impression that Storm's eyes were familiar—associated with some memory of long ago. Neither she nor her father, however, appeared to find any double meaning in his reply.

Well, to make a long story less long, Mrs. Shuster and Mr. Caspian had put their heads together over the hotel idea. Both had taken advantage of Peter Storm's brief absence to forget that it had originated in his brain. They spoke of "our plan," and for the moment he claimed no credit, as I should have been tempted to do. It was only when they began to develop the said plan upon lines evidently different from those agreed upon with him that he roused himself.

"In thinking it over," Ed Caspian explained to Larry, "Mrs. Shuster and I have decided that the simplest thing would be for me to advance any capital necessary to start the hotel enterprise: advertising and a lot of things like that. All in a business way of course. Miss Moore can give me a mortgage——"

"I beg your pardon," the S. M. cut him off in a voice quite low but keen as a knife. "The hotel suggestion was mine, wasn't it, Miss Moore?"

"Yes," Pat assented, "it certainly was." She looked from one man to the other, puzzled and interested.

"I shouldn't have made the suggestion if I weren't more or less of an expert in such matters." Storm said this with almost aggressive self-confidence. One had to believe that he knew what he was talking about; that his apparently mysterious past included the management of hotels, and this instinctive if reluctant credence was a tribute to the man's magnetic power. He did look the

last person on earth to be a hotel-keeper! Believing that he might have been one ought to have destroyed the romance attached to him, but somehow it made the flame of curiosity burn brighter.

"Don't you all think," he went on, "that the suggestor ought to have a voice in the working out of the scheme—that is, if he has anything to say worth hearing?"

"Seems to me this is a case for acts, not arguments," remarked Caspian. "It isn't good advice but money that's needed at this stage."

"Exactly," said Storm. "The question is, how is it to be obtained? I think it would be more advantageous to Mr. Moore and his daughter for a small syndicate to be formed than for them to get the capital on a mortgage. They are amateurs. They don't know how to run a hotel. They might make a failure, and the mortgage could be called in—"

"I wouldn't do such a thing!" Caspian angrily cut him short. "That's why I came forward—so they could have a friend rather than a business man—"

"It turns out awkwardly sometimes, doing business with friends," said Storm, giving the other a level look straight from eye to eye. So may a cat look at a king. So may a steerage passenger look at a millionaire if he isn't afraid. And apparently this one wasn't afraid, having only other people's axes to grind, not his own. "Forming a company or syndicate, Mr. and Miss Moore would have shares in the business, given them for what they could put into it: their historic place and beautiful house. Mrs. Shuster would take up a large group of shares, and would, I understand, become one of the first

guests of the hotel, to show her confidence in the scheme. Isn't that the case, Mrs. Shuster?"

"Oh, yes!" she agreed. All the man's magnetic influence—temporarily dimmed by her old friend Ed in the motor car—seemed to rush over her again in a warm wave.

"Mr. Caspian is of course free to join the syndicate," continued the S. M. "But he, too, is an amateur. He may know how to live well in hotels, he doesn't know how to run them well."

"I'm not a hotel-keeper, thank heaven, if that's what you mean!" said Caspian. "But I happen to have money."

"Yes, you happen to have money," thoughtfully repeated Storm.

"Which—I suppose we may take for granted—you haven't."

"You may take that for granted, Mr. Caspian."

It was now quite evidently a duel between the two men, strangers to each other and as far apart as one pole from another, yet for some reason (perhaps unknown, only *felt*, by themselves) instinctively antagonistic. Jack and I were lost in joy of the encounter, and a glance at Pat showed me that, schoolgirl as she is, she caught the electric thrill in the atmosphere. Larry, too, was visibly interested. He'd opened a box of games on the table where rested his elbow, and taking out some packs of cards he had mechanically begun to play "Patience"—a characteristic protest of the spirit against dull discussions of business, even his own. He would like things to be nicely arranged for him, I suspected, but he couldn't be bothered with petty details. He seemed just to take it happily for

granted that people ought to be *glad* to straighten matters out for a charming "play-boy" like him. The tone of the two men, however, had suddenly snatched his attention from the intricacies of Patience (a fascinating new Patience, I noticed). He was captured, but not, I felt, because of any personal concern he had in the battle. I did wonder what was passing behind the bright hazel eyes which moved from Storm's face to Caspian's, and back again.

"Well, then, if I'm to take it for granted that you've no money, where do you come in?" the late socialist was sharply demanding while my thoughts wandered.

"I don't come in," said Storm. "I act as Mrs. Shuster's secretary, and her spokesman. It seems she has no business manager, so my duties may carry me occasionally in that direction, I begin to see. If she's to have interests in this affair, I must protect them according to my judgment. My judgment tells me that they could best be protected by having an expert for a large shareholder—perhaps the largest. Such a man would have every incentive to work for the scheme's success. And I know the right man."

"You do?" Contemptuous incredulity rang in Caspian's emphasis. "Name him!" This was a challenge.  
"Marcel Moncourt."

Ed Caspian laughed a short, hard laugh.

"Marcel Moncourt! Why, that man wouldn't give up his ease to manage a gilt-edged boarding-house in the country—no, not to please an emperor!"

"Maybe not," said Storm coolly. "There aren't many emperors just now a Frenchman wants to please."

"You think he'd give the preference to you!"

"Not to me. But to Mr. and Miss Moore. And"—the man glanced at his employer—"Mrs. Shuster." She flushed at the immense, the inconceivable compliment, for Marcel Moncourt, I suppose (don't you?), is as grand a *chef* as there is in the world, almost a classic figure of his kind, and a gentleman by birth, they say. Even Mrs. Shuster, who doesn't know much outside her own immediate circle of interests, had managed to catch some vague echo of the great Moncourt's fame. As for Larry, he became suddenly alert as a schoolboy who learns that the best "tuck box" ever packed is destined for him.

"Good lord!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean you can get the one and only Marcel to take charge at Kidd's Pines?"

"I know—or used to know—a person who can certainly persuade him to do so, and on very short notice," said the S. M.

"That settles it, then!" cried Larry. "Can you guess what I was doing? 'Ruling passion strong in death'—and that sort of thing! I was betting with myself which of you two would come out ahead in the argument and gain his point over the other. I thought—I must say—the odds were with Mr. Caspian, for gold weighs down the scales. But Marcel is worth his weight in gold. Put him in the balance, and the argument's ended. I didn't mean to take a hand in the game! I felt so confident it would work out all right either way. But with Marcel and Mr. Storm on one side, and Mr. Caspian with a gold-mine on the other, we choose Marcel—don't we, girlie?"

"Who is Marcel?" inquired girlie, thus appealed to.

Larry laughed. "She's just out of a convent," he

apologized for his child's abysmal ignorance. "Marcel Moncourt, my dear," he enlightened her, "was the *making* of a millionaire, who would never have been anybody without him. Once upon a time there was an old man named Stanislaus, not particularly interesting nor intelligent except as a money grubber—oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Caspian, I forgot he was related to you!—but he was lucky, and the best bit of luck he ever had was getting hold of this Marcel as *chef* and general manager of his establishment. No one had bothered about Mr. Stanislaus before, rich as he was, but with Marcel at the helm, he could have any one he liked as his guest, from a foreign prince or an American President to a Pierpont Morgan. Of course they all tried to get Marcel away; but he was like iron to the magnet—none of us could ever understand why. It looked almost like a mystery! When there were no more Stanislaus on earth, then, and not till then, Marcel considered himself free. He had the world to choose from; and he chose to rest. He is now a gentleman of leisure. Any one starting a hotel who could secure Marcel would be made—made! But I should have said no hope, short of a Fifth Avenue palace, if that. No more hope for us than of getting the Angel Gabriel to stand blowing his trumpet in front of the door."

"There is no hope. I'd stake my life on that," said Caspian emphatically. "When I came into my cousin's money, after the poor old man's murder and all the other tragedies, I offered Marcel a salary of fifteen thousand dollars a year to come to me. By Jove, I'd have built a house to fit him. But he wouldn't listen. Tired of work was his only excuse."

"Tired of making millionaires popular, perhaps," murmured Mr. Storm to a picture of Cousin John Randolph Payton on the wall.

Caspian's heavenly blue eyes snapped with another kind of blue fire. "I should say that no power except that of blackmail could induce Marcel Moncourt to take any interest, active or financial, in our scheme down here. Perhaps that is your secret?"

If I hadn't seen the steerage passenger smile when Mrs. Shuster accused him of being a gentleman and offered him cast-off clothes, I should have expected violence. He smiled much in the same way now, to Pat's relief and Larry's disappointment. "Perhaps it is," he said. "I've always thought it must be exciting to be a blackmailer. Anyhow, it is my secret. If I can get—or, rather, if my friend can get—Marcel to put money and gray matter into Kidd's Pines as a hotel, Mr. Moore—Miss Moore, will you have him—and the Syndicate?"

"We would have him and the devil!" cried Larry.

Ed Caspian looked as if he suspected that having Marcel and Peter Storm might turn out much the same thing. But he was the only "No," and the "Ayes" had it.

Afterward Mrs. Shuster told me that Ed Caspian vowed to find out all about our Ship's Mystery if it took his last penny. So we may "see some fun," as Larry says.

But perhaps you've had enough of our scheme and schemers for the moment, Mercédes mia!

Ever your loving

MOLLY.

P. S. I suppose he can't be a blackmailer? He might be *anything!*

## IV

PATRICIA MOORE TO ADRIENNE DE MONJOURT,  
HER BEST FRIEND IN THE CONVENT  
SCHOOL AT NEUILLY

*Kidd's Pines, Long Island,*

April 3d.

MA CHÉRIE:

J'ai beaucoup de choses à dire—oh no, I forgot—you asked me to write in English, because it would help your spelling. That was a large compliment, *mon petit chouz*, but do look up the most difficult words in the dictionary. It would be more safe. I am trying to think in English, but I find I think faster in French still; and I need to think extremely fast now, as fast as heat lightning. *Aussi* I dream in French, about American people, which mixes me up; and one laughs when I don't get my sentences right. You must not take me for a model, though I will do all my possible, and improve as the time passes on.

As I promised, I begin a letter to you on the ship, but I cannot finish, for too many things happening and the times—I mean the weather—being so bad. Perhaps it is better I did not, for everything is different now from what we thought. Darling Larry has lost all his money, and we are in the soup. But it is a superb soup, because we have a *chef* the most famous of the world. I have almost fear to tell you his name! It is the same as yours, only

that naturally he has not the "de," though he has the grand air and is richer than we when we were rich. It will look strange to you, this, that we should have an employé so wonderful when we are in ruins. But he is not an employé like others. We are as his servants. And we have him because he helps us make our house a hotel for the high world. He is not alone in helping us, my father and me. There is, besides, a band who helps. Not a hand that plays music, you comprehend, but a ring—a circle of people. I have made their acquaintance on the ship, all but one who came on the *quai* when we arrived, and broke the truth of Larry. I did not cry, though I saw all my happy days we have talked of so much, you and me, fly away in smoke. I thought not of them, but of Larry, which was worse, for I had a cold fear in my heart like the lumps of raspberry ice we sometimes swallowed too large and fast on the fête days. I feared he might have suffered too much and made himself die. I can speak of that now when I know he is saved. But he did not even wish to be dead. He is brave and wonderful and has earned some of the money back at roulette. I hoped he would earn more like that, it was so easy, beginning only with a few dollars and waiting till they mounted up, and he hoped so, too. But he has had to put himself in the hands of the band who advise us, and they do not approve the roulette. It is too often raided by the police; and then you do not win quite always.

Larry is too much the charmer for a good man of affairs, and I do not know what would have become of us two if it had not been for this band. It was they who thought of the hotel. At least, it was one—a man. I cannot tell

you all about him now, it would take too long a time. And, besides, what can you tell of a man when you know nothing of him unless that he makes every one march as he chooses either with some word or some look of the eyes, though he is the poorest of all and has taken work as secretary? He is named Storm. For a man he is young, though for you and me it would be an age—thirty or thirty-two, Mrs. Winston thinks. Captain and Mrs. Winston are of the band. He is Captain the Honourable. That is the way the English put their titles with the soldier part in the front. They spell it "Honble" on letters or the lists of passengers, but you do not call them by it at all, which is odd; because if not, what is its use? Mrs. Shuster (that is another of the band) says Captain Winston will be a lord some day. He is wounded and very handsome, and his wife is a beauty and a darling. I have to call her Molly and she has made of me a "Patsey." What do you think she has done, when it burst out that Larry and I were poor as the mice of churches? She paid the *douane* for my dresses, those sweet things Madame la Marquise, your dear mother, troubled herself to choose for me. Then Molly bought them as I believed for herself, as we are much of the same form, though she is grander by some centimetres in front and at the waist. It was only on my birthday that I find they are for me! I said, "But, dear, dear cabbage, I can never wear all these when I am keeping a hotel!" She said: "Yes, you can, my cabagette, for this hotel will be different. You and Larry are high swells and it will be a favour that people are let into your beautiful home. They will be glad of the luck to know you and they will pay for the privilege. The

better you dress and the more proud you act the more will they be content and think they have the money's worth. Only the richest ones can afford to come."

That is well, perhaps, because we have not enough rooms for a grand crowd. We have twenty-five *chambres*, counting great with small, and with haste two beds are being installed in some. Each person, if you will believe me, is forced to pay at the least thirty dollars (a hundred and fifty francs) a day. It is crushing! I have thought no one would come. But they do already, though we are not yet in a state of reception. The first day when the announcement showed in the journals of New York and all other grand cities the rush began. That same night we had what Molly Winston calls *sholes* (or is it *shoals*?) of telegrams. I thought *shoals* were of fish only. I will copy a little of the *avis au public*. *Le voilà!*

"Monsieur Marcel Moncourt has the honour to announce that from April 1st the historic mansion of Kida's Pines, near Huntersford, Long Island, will open under his direction as a hotel de luxe."

There was quite a lot more, explaining how Lafayette and Jerome Bonaparte, and King Edward VII when Prince of Wales had been entertained by ancestors of the present owner, Mr. Laurence Moore, who would now act as host; and that there were baths to all but five of the bed chambers. Was it not good chance that Larry had them put in? They are not paid for yet, and the plumber, with some others, has been very unkind, making Larry a bankroot—no, a bankrupt. We shall soon be rich again with all these thirties and forties and fifties and hundreds of dollars a day (we can take forty people to say nothing

of servants if some of them will sleep *ensemble*), and then we can pay every one. *Aussi* the announcement spoke of the pines which have given to our place its name. There was a pirate captain named Kidd who buried gold under these trees or near, and though each of our generations since has dug hard whenever it felt poor, nobody has ever found anything, so the treasure is still there—wherever it is. Larry wanted to advertise that all might dig, male or female. Monsieur Moncourt would not permit, however. He said his name was enough, and further advertising would waste the money of the *syndicat*. He is part of the *syndicat*, and has more in it than the others. He would not come if it could not be that way, Mr. Storm told Larry. Mr. Storm has a friend who is a friend of Monsieur Moncourt's, a great friend he must be, because Monsieur M. will do anything to please him. Monsieur M. takes his salary of manager in shares. Mr. Storm does not have shares, because he, too, like us, is poor as mice who go to church—which it seems they are allowed to do in America; though I do not think we should let them in much in France. Mrs. Shuster, who has Mr. Storm for her secretary, is of the *syndicat*, and so is Mr. Edward Caspian, the man who broke the bad news for me. He is about as young as Mr. Storm, yet looks more young on account of being small and blond, with curly hair like Larry's. But he is not like Larry in other ways. Molly says he looks a combination of Lord Fauntleroy and Don Juan. I have read Lord Fauntleroy when I was a child, but not Don Juan, so I cannot judge. Do you know, *chérie*, I think he is in love with me, and Angèle thinks the same. She says it will be a good work to marry

him, as he has one of the most gross fortunes of America, besides being rather *beau*, and *bon garçon*. Angèle was not nice for a time when we had no servants at Kidd's Pines, and I asked her to wash a dish. She had the air of one ready to burst. But we stayed a few days at the Winstons' place, which has been left in a will to them, and Angèle became more happy. She says Madame la Marquise often took counsel with her and sacrificed her to me that I might have some one of experience to advise me in things of life greater than the dressing of hair. She has fallen into a devotion for Larry, and it is for his sake she wishes me to say yes if I am asked by Mr. Caspian. Well! I have not to decide till by and by, because he has not asked. For the moment I do not like him so very strongly, I cannot know why. Every one else seems to, except Mr. Storm, and a darling dog we have here, a golden collie, belonging to Larry, but like the baths, not paid for. It jumped against Mr. Caspian and frightened him so much that he wished it to be tied in a chain. We did not do it, though. I don't love men to have fear of dogs.

Mr. Caspian has come to live with us—in our hotel, I mean. Though he has the shares, if you will believe me he pays three hundred and fifty francs a day. So does Mrs. Shuster. She has a suite of bedroom and sitting-room. A good many of our rooms are like that, with curtains between. It was Larry's idea when Mamma and he were married and invited many guests.

Mr. Storm would not come to stay, though Mrs. S. wished to pay for him. She is a very rich *bourgeoise* who drops something off herself whenever she moves, if it is

only a hairpin; but many time it is a worse thing. And she composes tracts about peace. She asked Mr. Storm to help her write some, but he said he knew nothing of peace, he had never had any. So you see he does what he likes, though a secretary. He has the most wonderful eyes ever seen. They haunt you as if they had looked deep into strange, sad things. You think of them at night before you go to sleep, and wonder about them, whether you have seen them long ago—and what they mean—for everybody thinks something different of him and his past, some good, some bad. He is not afraid of the collie, but pats it when he passes. And he lights up when he laughs! He has taken a room in the village near, in a little house, which he considers more suitable to him than this. Mr. Caspian, who was a socialist once, but is not now, says Mr. Storm dresses like an anarchist. He does not wish Mrs. Shuster to employ Mr. Storm, and this pleases her, because she thinks Mr. Caspian is "jealous." But figure to yourself! An old woman of forty and more!

I forgot to tell you the rest about Monsieur Moncourt. He directs the kitchen as well as the whole house, but you would not have to be ashamed of him even if you were parents. He does not come to our dining-room to eat, but has a little one of his own. He has gray hair, a sorrowful, dreamy face like a great artist who has lost an idea; but I suppose it is only that he is always thinking of some marvellous new *plat* to invent. He spends five days a week on Long Island and two in New York, for he has a house there of his own. I should love to go one day and see what it is like! Perhaps I shall go, with Molly.

I forgot *aussi* to tell you of the automobile you said you so much envied me. Captain Winston attended to the *douane*, and it is settled for us to keep the car as an "investment." I do not quite know who arranged this, because it was like the baths and the collie, not paid. But some one did arrange, and will be paid of course when we are making profits. I know it was Mr. Storm who said, in the *conseil de guerre* we had about the hotel, that there must be *at least* one motor to take guests on tour, and the smarter the car the better. But he could not have been the one to pay as he is the poorest of us all. Oh, I am so glad it is my *duty* to keep this darling car which was to have been my birthday present from Larry! I shall learn to drive it myself. Captain Winston will teach me. He knows how to drive all cars of every breed. Molly calls him her "Lightning Conductor." I could not wait till the chauffeur arrives.

By the way, we have a Russian count and his wife, an Austrian count and his, already all old, here. Mrs. Sh...cer is thrilled, and says their titles are a "draw." The trouble is the counts quarrel on politics and make snorty sounds at each other, so they have to be kept from colliding. It is I who must do this the most often, and it tears my nerves.

My pigeon, I will write again one of these days soon, when I have settled. Now I am still on my head!

Your upside down friend,

PATRICE.

P. S. Larry has read this letter and says it is very bad English—shocking! But I cannot write it all over again. You will see, I shall do better next time.

V

PETER STORM TO JAMES STRICKLAND, A NEW  
YORK LAWYER CELEBRATED FOR HIS  
BRILLIANT DEFENCE OF CERTAIN  
FAMOUS CRIMINALS

*Huntersford, Long Island,  
April Something or Other.  
(Why be a slave to dates?)*

DEAR STRICKLAND:

Yours full of reproaches for changing my plans and upsetting yours is "duly to hand," as you'd probably phrase it yourself. What are you for, my dear man, except to take trouble off the shoulders of others on to your own? I ask you that! You like it. You thrive on it. With your uncanny talent for character reading, you should never have expected anything of me but the unexpected. And the whole embroil is your fault, if you come to look at it between the eyes. I ought never to have come back from Siberia four years ago. You hauled me back. What did I do in the West and in the South? You know only too well. Yet here I am again, at your call.

You'll say you didn't call me to do what I'm doing now, but something widely different. I meant to answer the call in your way, it's true (if at all), but for reasons which have cropped up I prefer to do it in my own. You ought

to be pleased at this, because I've now *definitely determined to answer* the call. I hadn't at first. I'd made up my mind no farther than to come and look into the matter you spoke of. I'm looking into it all right where I am, I assure you, though from a different angle than that proposed by you.

I don't know why you "deduce" that there's a woman in the case, for there never has been one before. There were sometimes several, I admit. But never One. Trust you to see the distinction! Have you been pumping Marcel? You may as well admit it if you have, for I shall ask him when I see him next at one of our secret meetings, and he will confess. There's nothing he can refuse me, as you have cause to know—and you know why.

I inquire as to this more from curiosity than anxiety, because I should rather like to know what is in Marcel's mind about me. I never knew he had the qualities of a detective among his many gifts. He has plenty of others! But what does it matter what he thinks, or you screw out of him? I don't mind telling you frankly that your suspicions are justified—to a certain extent. It's not a woman who is in the case. It's a girl. Is that worse or better, think you?

I'm not in love with her, but Edward Caspian is, and I am dog in the manger enough not to want him to get her. My future fate—as I expect it to be—lies thousands of hard miles away from this exquisite American child, just unfolded from the pink cotton of a French convent. I am human, however. I'm not a stone, but a man. I saw the girl on the ship, and before I heard her name something stirred in my memory. You know already what

the name is, if you know anything from Marcel, or if you've put two and two together—a favourite occupation of yours, and then skilfully demonstrating that they're five!

She didn't remember me—how could she?—though she did once say something about my eyes "looking familiar." Naturally I was interested in her. And though I thoroughly enjoyed the patronage of Mrs. Shuster and some others who condescended to visit us third-class animals, I could but appreciate the delicate discrimination of Miss Moore and her friend Mrs. Winston.

I've never thought of myself as a chivalrous person. On the contrary, I'm what my life has made of me, something of the brute. But such dregs of chivalry as had settled at the bottom of my soul's cup were stirred by the news of Laurence Moore's trouble and its immediate effect upon his daughter. I heard on the dock, and the child heard on the dock—from Caspian, who had come to meet my present employer, Mrs. Shuster. It was easy to see (knowing what we know of him now) that Caspian had decided at first sight to go for the girl, who has grown astonishingly pretty and attractive. I'm here to block his game. That's why I took on this idiotic job with Madam Shuster. It's enough to make a Libyan lion laugh! But I saw no other way of keeping near, to do the watchdog act—not being a gentleman or a millionaire like Caspian, able to live at leisure anywhere preferred.

This blooming hotel business was started to prevent Caspian getting his entering wedge into the crack of the family fortunes. He was all generosity. Wanted to lend money on a mortgage, just the sort of thing a lazy, happy-

go-lucky chap like Moore would snap at. And the child couldn't be expected to look farther ahead than her father looked. Marcel was my next inspiration—a bait to decide Moore that I was not to be despised as an adviser. Now, I am the power behind the throne—very much behind, it's true, not in the palace of the king at all, but prodding at the throne with a thin stick through an all but invisible hole in the wall. If it's visible to any one, that one is Caspian himself, who probably realized in the hour of battle between us that I'd guessed what he was up to.

I am a type he would dislike and distrust in any case, as I think small men are apt to dislike bigger ones capable of reducing them by superior brute force if necessary. As it is, he hates me. I suppose he thinks I have designs on Miss Moore myself: "the pauper adventurer who has already taken advantage of his influence over an older woman to gain access to the heroine." Sounds like a moving picture "cut in," doesn't it? Not only does he (the self-cast hero of the picture) intend to punish the villain's impudent interference with him, but to unmask the wretch in order to thwart his designs upon the heroine. To do this, the said hero has put a detective agency on to

■■■■■

I can hear you ask sharply, "How do you know this?"

The answer is, "I don't know. I feel it." And the life I've led has taught me to trust my feelings. I have been like a stag in the forest who scents the unseen hunters when still very far off. If the villain, Peter Storm, is "unmasked"—well, so much the worse for him, but others will fall with his fall, we know. And the danger for me (it is a danger, I admit) only adds to the—fun.

Probably you'll mention the word "damn" or some other analogous one when you read that. "*Fun!*" you'll sneer. But my dear fellow, it expresses my point of view. *I am* having fun. I'm having the time of my life. Afterward—"let come what come may, I shall have had my day." And I'm going to fight it out on these lines if it takes all summer—unless Caspian undermines me and blows up my trenches.

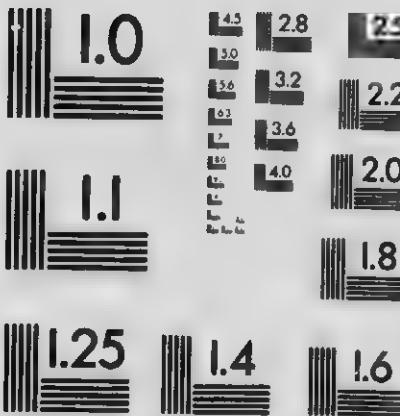
The latter, by the way, are of a homely character. I lurk in lodgings at the village dressmaker's. I have one room at the back of the house, its dormer window looking over a grass plot and a chicken coop. Fortunately the cock is as morose and reserved an individual as I am myself, without my sense of humour—or else he's henpecked. He never opens his head till it's necessary to salute the sunrise; and the hens consider it bad form to boast loudly because a mere egg has been given to the world. For this accommodation I pay four dollars a week, and ten cents a day for having a rubber bath filled. Breakfast of bread, butter, and coffee is brought to my room by a timid fawn of a dressmaker's daughter who does me the honour of fearing and admiring me, I surmise. I pay twenty cents for her attendance and admiration. Mine is the simple life, but luxurious compared with many of my experiences. As to clothes, I am always Hyde, never Jekyll. It's safer. My hat is the worst thing in hats you ever beheld, though I have at times surpassed it.

You would think I ought to have plenty of leisure on my hands for the work I brought from Siberia, but I confess the girl has got between me and it. Don't waste a smile. No girl born could tempt me to what I should



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have to give up for her. Besides, there are a thousand other obstacles between me and love. If she wastes a few thoughts on me—as perhaps she does sometimes—it's only curiosity concerning the "Ship's Mystery." That's what they all called me on board, I heard. But there is the past, a faded yet beautiful background of early youth—one of the few really beautiful things in my life. And there is the girl, a radiant figure in the foreground.

I'm in the house at Kidd's Pines often enough, doing my secretarial work (a howl of laughter here, please!), to see pretty well all that goes on, and the demoniac joy I feel in acting as *deus ex machina* I can't express to you, because I don't entirely understand it myself. But I wouldn't be out of this for anything.

Miss Moore has been learning to drive her car. (You know about that car!) Captain Winston began to give her lessons, but cracked up, as his wounds aren't thoroughly mended yet. I had half a mind to offer my services, but thought it would add too much fuel to the fire of curiosity, so held my peace until—well, several things happened first. Among them was the coming of Castnet, the chauffeur engaged by Marcel himself—a Frenchman, too young to be mobilized, but supposed to understand a Grayles-Grice. He looked a smart fellow, and a lesson or two went off well, according to what I heard in Mrs. Shuster's room. Miss Moore sometimes comes in when I am there, with news from the front, so to speak: what new guests have arrived, what they are like, how they get on together—or don't get on; for Kidd's Pines as a hotel is already a going concern.

Three days after Castnet's arrival Miss Moore gave up having her lesson in order to give Count von Falm and his wife a spin. They happened to be the only guests—except my boss—without a car of their own, and von Falm pointedly alluded to an advertisement promising an automobile for the service of visitors. Thereupon the bomb exploded. Young Castnet, like a sprat defying a sturgeon, refused to drive an enemy of his country. The sturgeon demanded the sprat's discharge. Miss Moore sought her father. "Larry" was teaching the Russian Countess tennis, and gaily gave his daughter *carte blanche*. She, overwhelmed by responsibility, temporized. France, you see, is her second home! The Austrian was in no mood to stand half measures, and gave notice of departure. Meanwhile, Castnet departed without this ceremony, unaware that Providence was at work in his behalf. Behold Kidd's Pines with its best room empty and minus a chauffeur! But Miss Moore was undaunted. At any moment somebody else might clamour for the car. She determined to be her own chauffeur, and on the strength of her half-dozen lessons, set out alone to experiment with the forty horsepower Grayles-Grice.

That was when I met her on her second excursion, I think. I was taking a walk, and she was stranded in the middle of the "king's highway," about two miles from Huntersford. Another car equally large and powerful was drawn up almost nose to nose with the Grayles-Grice, and the road was becoming congested with vehicles of various sorts. The Grayles-Grice blocked the way. It was impossible for anything else wider than a bicycle or a skeleton to proceed in either direction; consequently

you would have supposed that a big reception or an automobile race was taking place in the neighbourhood.

You can imagine what language would ordinarily, in such circumstances, have belched from the serried ranks of fiery Pierce Arrows, dashing Cadillacs, and even from peace-loving Fords; but what should you say was happening in the present instance? If you refuse to commit yourself to an opinion, it's only because you've never seen Miss Patricia Moore.

I will tell you what was happening!

All the men were out of all the cars, either helping, advising, or trying to get near enough to do one or both. The chauffeuse herself was sitting behind her wheel with the manner of a youthful queen on a throne receiving homage from courtiers. The Grayles-Grice is gray, and she was dressed in gray to match, a light pearl gray I should say it would be called. She has a complexion also like pearl, but not gray pearl. Excitement had given her a bright rosy colour. Her black hair—I don't know whether excitement makes a girl's hair curl—but anyhow hers was doing it, in little rings and spirals which fluttered in the breeze and blew across her cheeks and eyes. By the way, she has the bluest eyes I ever saw in human head. She was thanking her courtiers charmingly whenever they came within speaking distance, rolling her "r's" in a fascinating French fashion she has, and whenever a heated red man would lift his head from the open bonnet or pop up from under the car she would remark how *kind* he was, or how sad she felt that he should be having all this trouble for *her*! Then other men for whom there was not room at the bonnet or under the capacious Grayles-Grice envied

the hot red ones, and intimated (in order to get hot and red and awake sympathy themselves) that they and they alone could find out what was the matter. I should estimate that at least a dozen men had enlisted under the voluntary system, while others on the outer ring only waited their turn.

As for the stranded autos (whose number increased as the minutes went on), ladies young and old who sat desiring the return of their cavaliers looked as pleased as the wives of Circe's admirers must have looked while their male belongings were transformed into beasts.

"Why doesn't somebody roll the old thing out of the way and let us go on?" shrieked one of a carful of school teachers deserted by their chauffeur. He, from a distance, explained not too patiently that the trouble was, the thing *wouldn't* roll. I am pretty sure that not one of the men engaged was in a hurry for it to budge; for you know as well as I that all men are deeply romantic at heart, the oldest boys as well as the youngest boys—or more so. This girl looked like Romance incarnate—the face that we see in the sunrise and in our dreams—and it couldn't be often that most of these good commonplace chaps came in for such an adventure.

"Oh, Mr. Storm!" exclaimed Miss Moore when I added myself to the rank of recruits. Everybody stared at me. I felt I was not liked. "You see I've br-roken down!" she explained with the smile of a child. "The poor car won't move without ter-r-rible danger, and no one can find out what the mystery is—though they're *so good* to me!"

Perhaps she wildly hoped there might be a bond be-

tween the man of mystery and all other mysteries. It didn't seem likely that where so many men had failed I should succeed; still, I'd driven a Grayles-Grice (you remember, don't you?) and perhaps they hadn't.

"I suppose you don't know things about cars?" she questioned anxiously, as I drew nearer.

"I know some things," I admitted with due modesty. And suddenly I wanted to succeed where these others had failed. Because, though I had done some small favours for her, she hadn't known about them, so she had never thanked me except in the most casual way. I thought it would be rather nice to be thanked by her. I gazed at the Grayles-Grice, which also gazed at me from under her bonnet, and seemed to wink with her carburetor.

"How do you know she won't move?" I inquired of every one in general and no one in particular.

"The young lady begged us not to try, as it had been tried already by two gentlemen on motor bikes, who had to go on before this lot came," the school teachers' chauffeur defended the crowd's intelligence and his own. "I thought it might be a ball broken in the bearings had jammed a rear wheel, but it ain't that; so we took a squint at the differential, but it ain't that either."

"Shall we try again to give her a shove?" I suggested. "The traffic can't be held up here all night. Pretty soon it will be solid between here and New York."

"Oh, *don't* try till you find out what's the matter!" cried Miss Moore. "There was the most hor-r-r-rible noise when those two other men tried. We might be killed!"

I made her get down, and then, with a couple of bold

volunteers, risked the mystic peril that lurked behind the "hor-r-rible noise," by attempting to push the car to the edge of the road

If you will believe me, the Grayles-Grice rolled silently and smoothly as if she were on skates. In a moment she was out of the way, and the coast clear for the crowd. But no man near enough to have seen Miss Moore stirred until I had made a further discovery. The deep-rooted trouble which had defied the gray matter of all explorers proved to be nothing more or less than complete lack of gasoline. No one had thought of that, because the search had been for something serious and esoteric.

"Gas" was offered on all hands, and the G.-G., having drunk long and deep, was once more refreshed as a giant to run her course.

"Shall I drive, or will you?" I mildly asked Miss Moore.

"Can you?" she inquired.

"I don't think I've forgotten how. I drove a Grayles-Grice once for a year when I was down on my luck."

(You'll let that statement go unchallenged, won't you? It was the most beastly year of my life.)

We were about to start on a return journey to Kidd's Pines, with me at the helm, and quite an audience looking on, when two policemen came bumping along in a short-nosed car. They bawled out a question: Had any of us "folks" seen two fellows on motor bikes?

Miss Moore was the only one of the "folks" who had. "Do tell them I saw the men," she appealed to me. And then before I could open my lips she had (characteristically of woman) plunged into the recital herself. Her car had come to a standstill, she explained, in the middle of

the road. She couldn't make it start. Two motor bicycle riders had appeared and would have passed, but she signalled them to stop. She begged the pair to push her car out of the way. At first she thought they meant to hurry on. They went past her, one on each side. But they muttered something to each other, stopped suddenly, and jumped off their machines. They were laughing together as they came running back. They said, "All right, Miss," and took hold of the Grayles-Grice as if to wheel her to the edge of the road. But then there followed a fear-r-ful bang, like a pistol shot, and Miss Moore noticed a queer smell—a little like the Fourth of July when you were a child. She was frightened, and so were the men. One of them cried out, "Something wrong here! This'll take an expert!" And the other warned her, *whatever* she did, not to let anybody who didn't understand that make of motor try to budge the wheels an inch. Then the two were obliged to go in haste because they had a ferry-boat to catch. Not long after autos and autos began to stream along from both directions, and were held up because she warned every one not to move the car.

Clever dodge, wasn't it? The pair had robbed a jewelry shop window, and bagged a whole trayful of suburban engagement rings. As it happened, the police had taken up a wrong scent before they got on the right one. But had the watchdogs come along a few minutes earlier they would have found their way blocked effectively. One of the *thieves* had fired a torpedo in the road just behind the G.-G. to scare the chauffeuse (one of those big, fat torpedoes motorists and bicyclists sometimes use) to frighten

dogs) and so had secured a clear road to the nearest ferry. The policemen found the fragments of the torpedo in the dust—after I had suggested their looking for it.

That is the way I entered Miss Moore's service as temporary chauffeur, combining the duties as best I may with secretarial work for Mrs. Shuster. I'm not sure yet how the two parts are to be doubled successfully, but I'm sure of one thing: I don't mean to throw either part up at present, so there's no use in your grumbling or preaching.

Some new people have come to stay in the hotel, a jolly family of boys and girls, and a few days' motor trip is suggested, with me at the helm. The party will consist of the jolly Family, about whom more later; Miss Moore as conductress; and Captain and Mrs. Winston accompanying in their own car, as chaperons. For some extraordinary reason, which puzzles me, Mrs. S. is not going. Apropos of this excursion, I warn you, my dear friend, that you needn't fash yourself to answer my letter in a hurry. You may take time to think. Mrs. Shuster is not only willing, but anxious, for me to drive for the party. I can't imagine why. But I shall certainly know why, and perhaps to my sorrow, when I get back. If I hadn't taken on the job, Caspian would. He spent two days away from Kidd's Pines, and Moncourt (just back from a trip to town as I finish writing) saw him in N. Y. in a Grayles-Grice, apparently taking a lesson how to drive. (His own car is a Wilmot.) When he returned, it was without the Wilmot. Said he'd had an accident, and his auto would be laid up for a week; he hoped Miss Moore would let him avail himself of her G.-G. when necessary. He was too late, however, for this particular occasion. All ar-

rangements had been made in his absence. I've nobly refused an extra salary; but I expect to have heaven knows how much extra fun. I bet Caspian's car will be mended unexpectedly soon, as another is booked to drive the G.-G. this time.

Yours,

P. S.

The Wilmot has arrived from New York, and doubtless will follow us like a tame dog. If my hand has not forgotten its cunning, the said dog will find itself often out-distanced.

## VI

### THE HONBLE MRS. WINSTON TO THE COUNTESS OF LANE

*Easthampton, Long Island.*

*The loveliest moonlight April night.*

DEAREST MERCEDES:

We're just beginning a short motor trip, pausing here all night because it's beautiful, and because there's a dance which Pat and a large family of girls, appropriately named Goodrich, wish to sample. To tell the truth, I shouldn't mind dancing, myself! They're going to have a quaint new thing dedicated by its inventor to Long Island. It's called the Gull Glide. But Jack did too much last week, teaching Patsey to drive her giant Grayles-Grice, and he says if he danced anything it would have to be the Shambler's Shake. I wouldn't put my nose inside the ballroom without him; vowed I'd be bored stiff. The Goodrich girls' mother is chaperoning her brood and Pat. I made Jack "seek his bed," as the French say, but I'm on the balcony of our private sitting-room, in the moonlight, writing by an electric lamp whose shade looks like an illuminated red rose seen through silver mist. The music, which throbs up to me like heart-beats, mingles with the undertone of the sea and makes me thankful that Jack's so nice and loves me so much. Not to be loved in such music and such moonlight would make one feel one wasn't a woman!

## THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR

The dance has just begun and will last hours. I've no intention of trying to sleep till it's over, because I'm sure Pat will have things to tell which really can't wait till morning. Things like that never can! Meanwhile I shall have time for a long letter to you—the kind you say you like to get.

This is really for Monty also, since you are now with him, helping him to get well, "Somewhere in France." Jack wanted to write a few lines to-night, to put with mine, but his arm is very lame. He said, "Tell Monty this is like old times, when he was recuperating in Davos, and I was 'Lightning Conductor' for Molly Randolph."

Good gracious, what a lot of water has run past mills and under wheels of motors since then! But luckily (since you ask us to chronicle our adventures, as Jack did for Monty in those days) we can still mix the honey of love with the lubricating oil of the machine. It will most likely be Pat's and somebody else's love, not ours, although our stock never runs dry. But you're interested in Pat's affairs, and really they do get more complicated and exciting every day. I shan't tell you much about them just now, but will save that part of the narrative for by and by, in case there's anything to add at half-past midnight. There generally is news from the front about that time.

Meanwhile, Monty (who is as ignorant of this country as Jack was only the other day) clamours for J.'s "impressions of America." Since Jack can't put them on paper, I will. I know all his most topographical thoughts, because he's trying them—not "on a dog" but on me, while I drive the car to save his good right arm. "The Lightning

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#### LONG ISLAND

...There's absolutely nothing like it on the other side of the water, not even in Devonshire or France ...

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Conductor Discovering America" I call him, as everything surprises and interests him so hugely, you would think he was an "O Pioneer!" Long Island isn't your "pitch," Mercédes dear, and you don't know much about it from the inside, so to speak. You may imagine, therefore, that it's a small, sophisticated spot on the map for us to *discover*. But there's where you're wrong, my dear! It's not small and it's not sophisticated. It may look tiny on paper, but it feels far from tiny when you set forth to motor over it. It feels about the size I used to picture England before I went abroad.

Jack fancied (he dared not say so to me till he could add "I made a big mistake") that America was new and indigestible, like freshly baked bread. As for Long Island, he visioned it as a seaside suburb of New York. Now, he's so fascinated with Awepesha and its environment that he's simply bolting history by the yard! You know, he always was keen on that sort of thing when he travelled; but like most Britishers he flattered himself that he had been *born* knowing all that was worth knowing in the history of the United States: a little about the Revolution and the Civil War, and "—er—well really, what else *was* there, you know, if you'd read Cooper and 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' when you were a boy?"

Now, he browses in Cousin John Randolph Payton's respectable library, where every book is bound like every other book in "half calf," and he sees that things began to wake up over here several hundreds of years ago. He has even discovered that an ancestor of his was one of the first important settlers of Long Island, apparently a perfect pig of a man who was horrid to innocent Indians—charm-

ing Indians who believed that Europeans meant what they said. I can't reconcile it with Jack to have had a pig for an ancestor, but he certainly had, at least one. Luckily the tendency has run out in the family ages ago.

But to turn from ancestral pigs to our Island!

Jack says the history of Long Island is the history of the whole country in miniature, like "the world seen through the little eye of a sparrow," as Emerson would have said. In fact, it's *Some* island, as Emerson would *not* have said; and of course we think our part the loveliest and historicalest of all. There's more variety in history as well as scenery on this island than in many entire *states*. You simply take your choice. You say to yourself, "Do I prefer Indian history and names? Or do I prefer the Dutch? Or does my taste run in the direction of the English? Do I want to visit the sites of Indian massacres or Revolutionary battles? Does pirate treasure lure me? Am I thrilled by the adventures of whaling-ships and their brave captains?" When you've chosen, you point your auto's nose in the direction desired. The only thing you *couldn't* find in the Island's thousand miles of glorious roads—(yes, my child, a thousand miles, to say nothing of the not so glorious ones!)—the only thing, I repeat, would be something completely modern.

That proud statement doesn't sound true, but it is. You could find plenty of new houses, the newest of the new: palaces of millionaires, middle-sized houses of middle-class people who are happier than the happiest millionaires; fantastic cottages for summer folk; cozy cottages of "commuters"; queer colonies of Italians, and even of darkies; but there isn't a foot of Long Island

ground on which these palaces and houses and cottages and colonies have sprung up that isn't as historic as European soil. It's entralling to see how intimately and neatly history here links itself with history on the other side: history of England, France, and Holland; noble names and great events. That's what delights Jack, picking up these links, and fitting them together like bits of jigsaw puzzles. He's absolutely *thrilled*, and wants to stop the car whenever we come to one of the curiously deformed old trees which still, on country roads, mark the direction of ancient Indian trails. This fad of Jack's leads to awkwardness during our present excursion, as we're part of a weird cavalcade which I'll describe to you later. But just now I can't let you off those trees!

The Indians of different tribes had a way of bending one of the lower boughs of a young oak chosen for the sacrifice, bending it so that it grew horizontally, pointing the way along the trail for the initiated. They would have trees done like that at regular intervals; but if you were a silly European you wouldn't know without being told what the trees meant by sticking out their elbows in that significant way; and so you would stupidly proceed to get yourself lost.

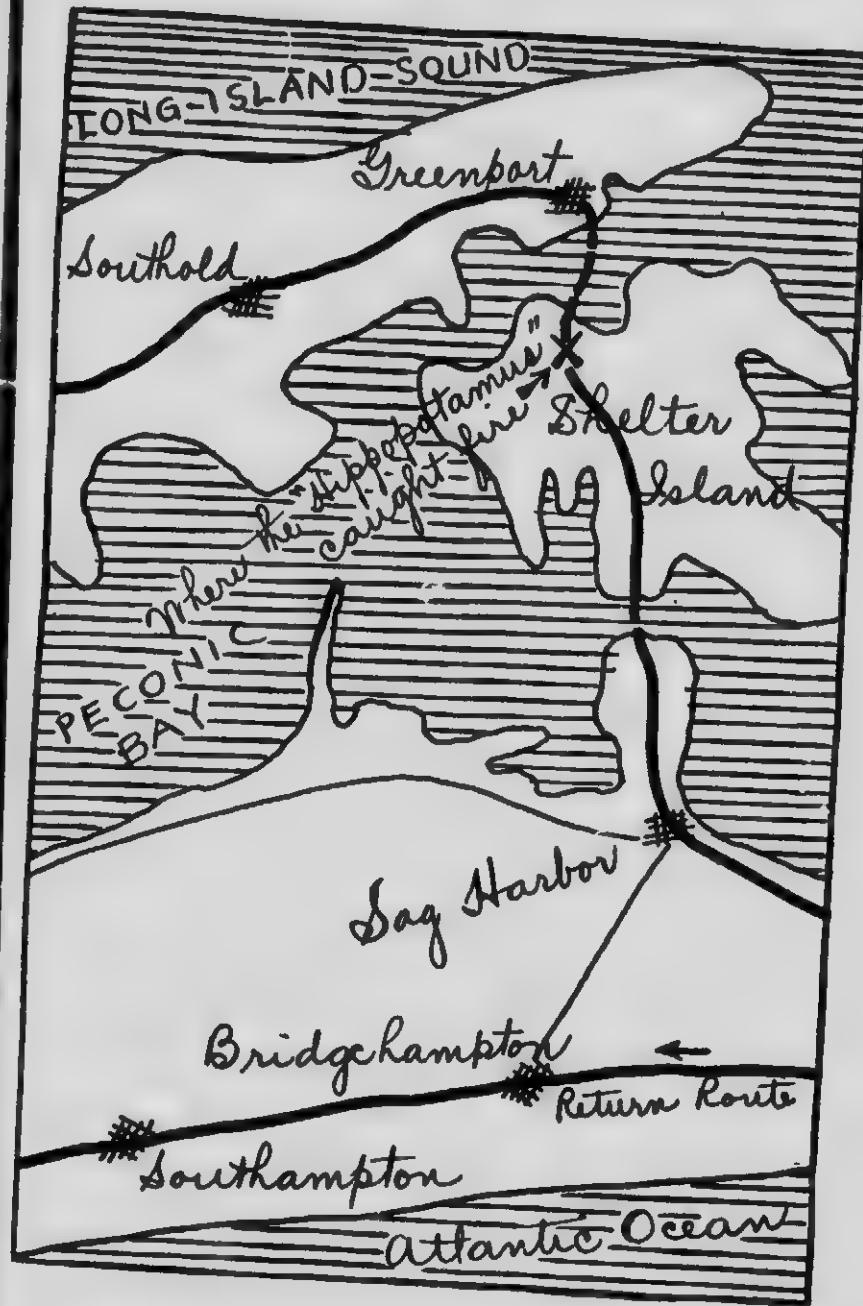
Think what those old trees could tell, if by laying your ear against their trunks you could understand the murmurous whisper inside, like secret voices behind a thick closed door! They look extraordinarily intelligent, thrusting out their long arms and crooking up their elbows, as I said. It's just as if you asked them, "How do I get to the sea?" and they, with Indian reticence, answered with a gesture instead of speech. Some of these arms have

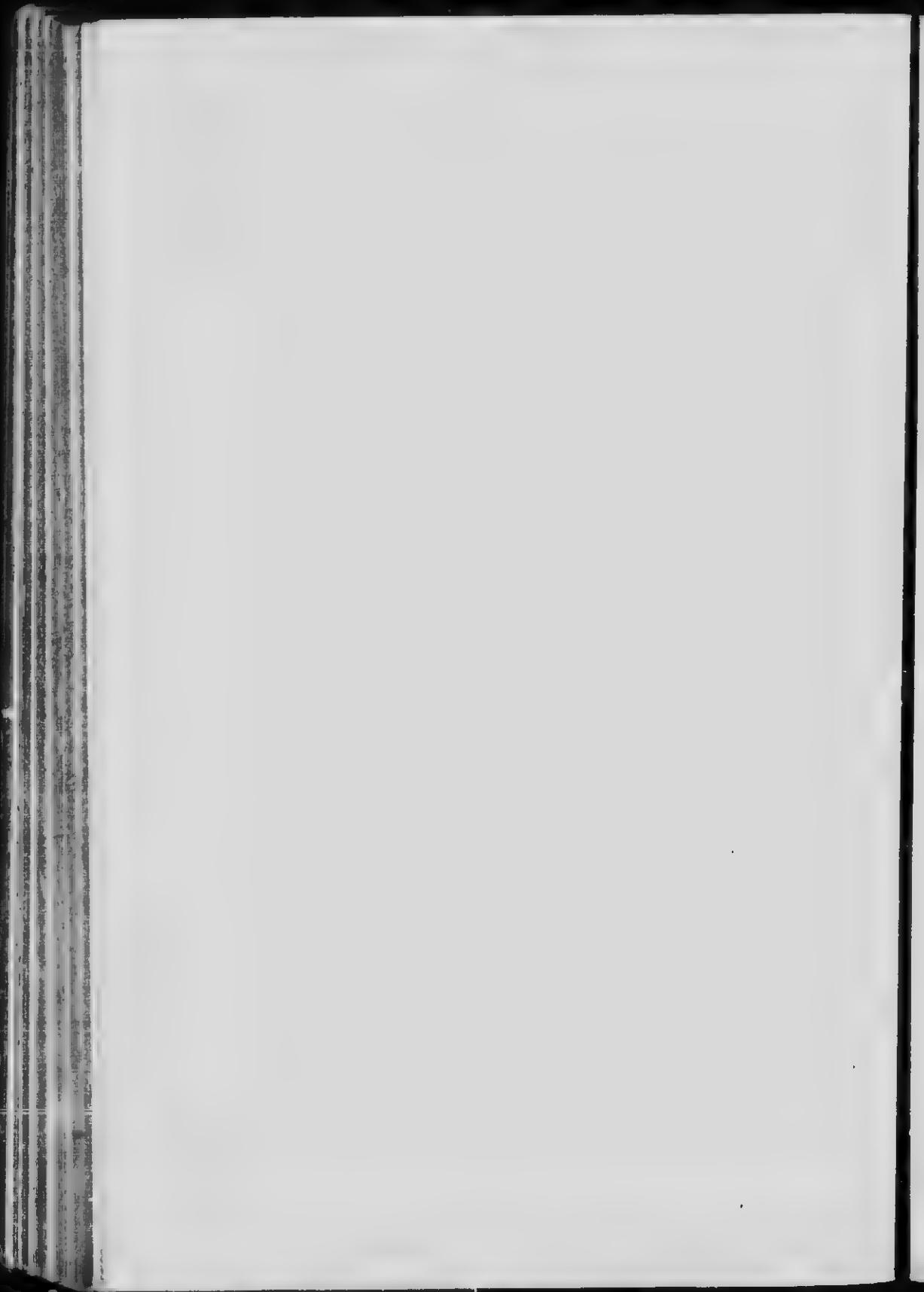
grown to such a length and thickness that they look like the bodies of animals. You can imagine little girls and boys riding on them, playing they are on horses. Or you can picture a fair maid and a man sitting side by side on one of those big, low-growing branches, as if it were a comfortable sofa. It would be a *lovely* place to be proposed to on a summer's day!

Does your respect for Long Island begin to grow? I haven't told you yet a quarter of the things that give it interest.

Our part of the Island, the eastern part, used to be harassed by British cruisers in the Revolution. Also it is the Captain Kidd part. I suppose even Monty knows about Captain Kidd? It seems that he used to be Jack's favourite pirate. When I was at the pirate-loving age I didn't care for Kidd as much as for others, because he had such respectable beginnings. Think, a Scotsman from Greenock of all places! And then he became a pirate not for the fun of flying the black flag like story-book pirates, or because he was disappointed in love, but because he cannily decided that he could gain more by turning pirate than by chasing pirates, which Lord Bellomont, the Governor of New York, had sent him out to do. Worst of all, when he was caught Kidd put the blame on his crew, and vowed that they'd forced him into evil courses. Now that we've a house on Long Island, however, I've taken Captain Kidd to my heart. He belongs more to the Moores of Kidd's Pines than to us, of course, but I value and vaunt him as a neighbouring ghost of distinction.

Both our place and Kidd's Pines are not a great distance





from Shelter Island, where one lovely umbrella pine exists, under which the pirate is said to have buried his treasure in 1669. He may have emptied his pockets there one day, but that's *nothing* to what he seems to have done at Kidd's Pines. Gardiner's Island—very aristocratic and historic—isn't far off, and it was from there Captain Kidd sent word of his arrival to Lord Bellomont, whose famous syndicate he'd betrayed and made a laughing-stock by turning pirate. He had his six-gunned sloop *Antonio* in harbour there, hoping to "make good" with the authorities; but he must have guessed that there wasn't much chance for him. He must have expected the very thing to happen that did happen: to be arrested with his whole pirate crew, and sent to England in a man-o'-war. If he foresaw that event, he'd not have been silly enough to bury his treasure on Gardiner's Island, where everybody would rush to search for it the minute his back was turned, would he? No, he'd take a few of his most trusty men and make secret night expeditions in boats from Gardiner's Island to some part of the shore far enough away not to come under suspicion. Then he would have to mark the place where the treasure was buried (oh, but a treasure rich and rare, for he'd brought everything away with him when he left his stolen ship, *The Quedah Merchant*, at San Domingo!), mark it in a way not too conspicuous, but permanent, in case he had the luck ever to get free and come back. No good marking with stones, because some one might build; but what a smart idea to plant trees so valuable that nobody to whom that land was granted would want to destroy them! This is what the canny man of Greenock is supposed to have done. He'd brought

the tree-slips from the south when he risked his spying expedition into northern waters. He meant to make a present of them to Lord Bellomont if the Governor were lenient: but the Governor's heart was flinty, and Captain Kidd found softer soil for the planting of his trees.

It makes a nice story anyhow, doesn't it? And Kidd's Pines as a hotel can put on five dollars a day extra at least because of the romance and glamour of that hidden hoard. By the way, it's "going some," that hotel inspiration of ours. What with history in general, buried treasure in particular, Marcel Moncourt's fame, Larry's charm and connections, and Pat's fatal fascinations, people flock to lay their money on the shrine. They're not all the right sort of people yet, but their money's good—and you can't think how amusing some of the poor pets are!

This Goodrich family I mentioned—a father, a mother, and three girls (who look as if they ought to be what I used to call "thrins")—are real darlings. They're so rich they can have everything they want, but they don't know what to want. They've always lived in Colorado close to the Garden of the Gods, and the only trips they ever took before were to the Yellowstone Park and the Grand Canyon. Consequently the scenery of the East looks to their eyes the height of miniature Japanese landscapes where you can step over the tops of the highest trees. They are built on the Garden of the Gods scale themselves, and take up so much room in a motor car that they ought to pay extra. (I do hope the girls may find men tall enough and brave enough to dance with them to-night!) When Peter Storm first saw the family,

he quoted the blind man in the Bible who received his sight by a miracle: "I see men as trees, walking!"

The Goodrichs aren't, however, the latest addition to the circle at Kidd's Pines. Two days before we were due to start on this little jaunt three youths we'd met on the ship turned up. They'd been "doing" the battle-fields of France they told us then, seeing the "backs of the fronts"—nice boys, just out of college—and they'd hardly the price of a meal left among them, they joyously said, when we landed. Of course they were in love with Pat in a nice, young, hopeless way. They bade her good-bye forever; but when they heard of the family crash, and read that the previously Unattainable One had become chatelaine of a hotel, they begged, borrowed, or stole (or more likely pawned) things which enabled them to rally round her as clients. They could "run" only to one room for the trio, and that the cheapest in the house; but you never saw three such radiant faces, till this motor expedition happened to be mentioned.

Fancy their feelings! Boats and bridges burnt at vast expense, and nothing to show for the holocaust! The adored one gliding away from under three disconsolate noses next day in an automobile full of Other People! Tom, Dick, and Harry (according to us; Jim, Charlie, and Frank according to their sponsors in baptism) simply couldn't bear it. They went out; and four hours later came back with a car (Lord made it, so let it pass for a car!) which they had bought somewhere, second or third hand, for a song. Even a song of sixpence would be dear for the great-grandmother of the whole progeny of Lords! The thing must be eight years old if it's a day, but the

boys are as pleased as Punch with their bargain. The oldest of them (Tom) thinks he has learned to manage the poor old lady; and on the strength of his knowledge and cheek they have hitched themselves to us as the tail end of our procession. They announce their intention of going also to the Hudson River country, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New England with us later, when we make those trips according to plan. My heart bleeds for the poor lambs, but Jack says they're perfectly happy, and those who don't fall by the wayside will draw lots in the end who is to propose to Pat.

They have no money, and no hats (at least I've never seen them wear any), and every one ignores their real names; but in their way they are unique, and it will add to the gaiety of nations to have them along if they're not killed before our eyes.

Speaking of the cavalcade, which I may as well describe since I'm on the subject, Peter Storm is driving Pat's Grayles-Grice, as Papa Goodrich says he would "as soon hire a canary bird to tame a mad bull as let that little slim Miss Moore pilot his family in a man-sized motor car." It seems that our soldier of fortune, P. S., was a chauffeur once for a year. He seems to have been most things, and I'm less than ever able to classify him. But whatever he is or may have been, if I hadn't fallen in love with Jack once and for all, I *might* have fallen in love with Peter Storm. There's something *very* queer about his past, that's evident; and only his conscience or bump of prudence prevents him from letting himself go on the tide of love for Pat. I see him looking at her now and then —an extraordinary look! But all his looks are extra-



EASTHAMPTON

"You enter beside the Great Pond, which is so charming in itself and in its flat frame of village green."

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dinary. I'd give anything almost if he'd confide in me. Perhaps he will. Lots of people do.

Meanwhile, Pat sits by him in the seat next the chauffeur's seat, and watches what he does and asks questions. He has persuaded Papa Goodrich to consent to her driving in easy places. But there are few easy places, because there are too many people enjoying this beautiful island, and just missing you by a miracle at corners. So I suppose it will be the same on future trips, and if Mrs. Shuster doesn't "kick," her secretary will continue to fill the bill as chauffeur till a professional one is engaged—a *Neutral* one, who neither yearns for the blood of Britishers nor the eyes of Austrians. Strange that Mrs. Shuster didn't want to come with us! The back of the Grayles-Grice is fairly full of Goodriches, but there's generous capacity for two more fattish passengers.

Mrs. S. said she would stop at home and help Mr. Moore receive guests, in case others came in his daughter's absence. But there's nothing in *that* excuse, really. Even Larry could have come away if he liked. Marcel Moncourt is equal to every emergency.

In our car we have offered to take a honeymoon couple named Morley with whom we feel sympathetic; and Mr. Caspian, the ex-socialist, in a roomy Wilmot, takes—himself.

Please look carefully at the map of Long Island which I send, and agree with me that though graceful in shape it's a long-bodied, short-legged island. Jack says it isn't. He says that I ought to see it's a lobster, and that what I call its legs are its claws. We live on the southern edge of its top, or northeast leg—or claw. If leg, it is kicking

Shelter Island, the biggest of the baby islands swimming gaily about within reach. If claw, it is engaged with the aid of its southern mate in trying to grab the morsel. And a dainty morsel, too!—as I have seen for myself to-day by crossing over to the little island for the first time. I've been so busy getting settled I couldn't do any sightseeing even in the neighbourhood, unless one counts running back and forth between Awepesha and Kidd's Pines.

We started out to-day on one of those pale opal mornings for which it seems Long Island is famous in spring and autumn. Literally, sky and water were one vast cream-white opal, shot with pink, and that wonderful flaming blue which rum has when it's set on fire. Our two places aren't very far from Greenport, as I've mentioned on postcards; and it's . . . Greenport that you take the nice red ferryboat across lovely, lakelike Peconic Bay, going to Shelter Island.

Things and thoughts are on such a large scale in America, even in the East (though the Goodriches don't see it!), that nobody seems astonished at the bigness of the said nice red ferryboat. To my British Jack, however, it loomed enormous for the smallness of its "job"—just running between the mother island and her baby islet! But when he realized just what the job in question was, he changed his mind about its being a small one. Our cavalcade was only an insignificant unit (as they say in war) among the force of motors which mobilized as the moment for the boat's departure came. There was a regular regiment at last; also lots of horses drawing old-fashioned gigs and quite smart "buggies," and capacious

carts; crowds of passengers on foot, women and children, young men and girls—so *pretty*, some of the shopgirls on holiday pointed out to us by the man we bought tickets of. They might have been princesses by their exactly right clothes (right at first glance, anyhow) and their proud air, if you hadn't seen them chewing gum and heard them saying "Huh?" to their young men. By the way, that ticket man was the *dearest* old thing, who very likely had never seen New York. He grew his beard under his chin like a kind of muffler, and said broad-mindedly while we were waiting that he didn't care "*what* people's religion was, so long as they went to their church twice every Sunday, rain or shine." We tried to look as if *we* did, because we liked him so much. He'd been a sailor in his day, and was proud of Greenport for its past—a fascinating, whaling past.

In spite of the crowd (bigger I'm sure than aboard the Ark, packed though it was to supply a new world with living creatures) there was room for us all, and there was room in the bay for our hugeness, among the flight of snow-white butterflies pretending to be sailboats.

Six minutes getting across; and then we touched at a gay little landing-place as different from that of serious, serene Greenport as the ex-sailor's own church would be from a *thé dansant*. I suppose when other sea-going men of old made money and grew just a little, *little* bit frivolous, they thought no more of whales, but moved across that bright stretch of water and spent their riches building pretty houses for their children to enjoy. "Shelter Island" is a charming name for a place to rest in after a strenuous life, don't you think? And the homes to

forget whales in are peaceful as days of Indian Summer after storms. The finest, and perhaps the newest ones, which have nothing to do with memories of adventure with grand old monsters of the deep, are on Shelter Island Heights. But I should rather live lower down in some house yellow as a pat of butter, under great drooping trees. By the way, Shelter Island's maiden name was *Ahaquatuwamuck*. No wonder she changed it. She *had* to! Incidentally an Indian chief, Yokee, delivered "unto Capitanie Nathaniel Sylvester and Ensigne John Booth one turfe with a twige in their hands," which meant giving the English possession according to a custom very cannily established by the British. Then poor dear "Yokee and all his Indians did freely and willingly depart." I don't believe a *word* of the willingly! They were just hypnotized!

We meant to have only a look round, and go on by another ferry to Sag Harbor, thence to arrive at Easthampton. But what do you think happened? Tom, Dick, and Harry's preposterous Hippopotamus broke out in an eruption of flame at the very moment when our procession was passing in review before a large beflagged hotel which faces the Bay. Of course it had never occurred to the boys to bring one of those patent extinguishers which all thoughtful automobiles wear now as a matter of course. And I suppose that (at best) they would have done the Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego act if Peter Storm hadn't heard yells and dashed back with paraphernalia from Pat's car. Jack dashed also, but Peter (I call him so behind his back) was nearer, and hadn't been wounded. In three minutes the Hippopotamus was

grinning with her mouth wide open, and the fire out, but looking exactly like one of those uncouth beasts you see in frescoes of the Inferno, in ancient monasteries abroad.

All the people in the world were on the wide veranda of that immense hotel, gazing at the free show, and we'd have sold ourselves bag and baggage for about thirty cents. It is a gray-shingled hotel trimmed with white, and battalions of rocking-chairs, mobilized in soldierly ranks, were all left rocking wildly at the top of their voices, their occupants had sprung up so suddenly. It did give a ghostly effect, as if the spirits of vanished guests had seized the chairs and begun visibly to use them the instant their rivals in the flesh were out!

If you fancy that we were able to escape from the eyes and the rocking-chairs without further pain, that shows how little you know the Hippopotamus. Being on fire had given it heart-failure or something. There it stood in front of the hotel, preventing any one else from driving up, till the animal's blushing keepers had pushed it to one side, and we were too noble to pretend we weren't acquainted with it, or even go on and let it follow. We'd started in the morning, though we had practically no run to make, because we wanted nearly all of one day to potter about Easthampton, seeing sights. But it ended in our having lunch at Shelter Island. The dining-room of that hotel was big enough to hold nearly everyone in New York, and most of the inhabitants of that and other large cities seemed to be there. I never saw so many "types" in my life, as one haughtily says in the Casino at Monte Carlo. Most of the girls were pretty, but there were people of all sorts of shapes and sizes;

and you can't conceive how the pretty, just right ones, back in rocking-chairs on the veranda after luncheon, looked at the plain, just wrong ones who ventured to amble past them in humble quest of other chairs. Good gracious *me!* I wouldn't have run that gauntlet for any prize less than winning Jack's love, unless I simply adored my own clothes and features!

Toward two o'clock we got away, still feeling as if we'd been pawed over and rejected in a bargain sale. But though eyes stared coldly, flags waved over the hotel as if in our honour, music played, and breezes blew. All the same we were quite glad to get to a peaceful, country-like ferry which would take us from the island of humiliation to a harbour where no one would know what had happened—namely, Sag Harbor on the right or lower claw, according to Jack, or the left leg, according to me.

There's a perfect flotilla of miniature islands in between the claws, and people live on them or spend summers on them. I should like to buy them all, because I couldn't be sure which I should like best, and whichever I had, I should know the ones I hadn't were nicer.

This was a wee ferryboat, almost as wee as the things you cross lochs in, in the Highlands of Scotland, but it hadn't so much the air of that being its day to tip over—which was a comfort. As for Sag Harbor, don't make the mistake of supposing that it sagged in any untidy way at the edges, or anything dull like that. Could you call a place dull which was first heard of historically in connection with a reward for killing wolves? There's a dear old town not far from the ferry. In its sedate middle-age it was a great whaling place, and is still crammed full of

sea captains' descendants who are, in their turn, crammed full of fascinating stories of old days of great adventure, just as their serene-looking, aged houses are crammed full of shells and coral and other ocean-borne treasures from the far corners of the world. Any of these people (we met some) can tell you that "Sagg" Harbor or the "Harbor of Sagg" (it's dropped the "g," as lots of smart people do in England!) came from the word Sagma, or chiei. Jack likes to believe that, just as he likes to find a romantic connection between Sagma, chief, or great man, and saga, or great song. But there are other less picturesque suggestions. If you'd seen what a fine old place Sag Harbor is, you'd hate to think it owed its name to a mere ground-nut the Indians called "Sagabon," or, still worse, "sagga," "thick-growing," which these ground-nuts were: "tubers big as eggs and good as potatoes, 40 on a string, not two inches underground."

Poor Jack simply stubbed his brain against the hardest of these Indian words at first, but now he has developed an almost inconvenient passion for them. When he looks at me steadily, and I think he is about to exclaim a sonnet to my eyebrow, he bursts out: "Tomahawk comes from 'tumetah-who-uf,' he who cuts off with a blow"; or, "Syosset *sounds* Indian, but is Dutch in origin. It came from 'Schouts'—'sheriff'"; and so on. I never know when I'm safe, but I'm as pleased as he is with the old Long Island place-names, English as well as Indian. Lots of them seem to tell as much about their meanings in a few syllables as an intimate chapter of history; Forge River, Sachem's House, Canoe Place, Baiting Hollow, Execution Rocks, Harbor Hill, South Manor, Bethpage,

and a whole pink and green mapful of others. Of course Jamesport was named after horrid old King James the Second, when the Island was under English rule; and every governor and grandee must have a place named after himself! But those names I've jotted down do call up pictures of life in the first settlers' days, don't they?

I suppose while people are alive, they never realize how romantic their own times are! They always look back. What kind of creature will sigh for the far-off quaintness of *our* days and make fun of our spelling? Those colonists who came in droves from France and Holland and England, to chase away Indians as dawn chases away the shadows of night, would have been surprised if they'd heard their times called romantic, yet how thrilling they seem to Jack and me, as we repeat the old names they gave, and see the "havens" which welcomed them in the New World!

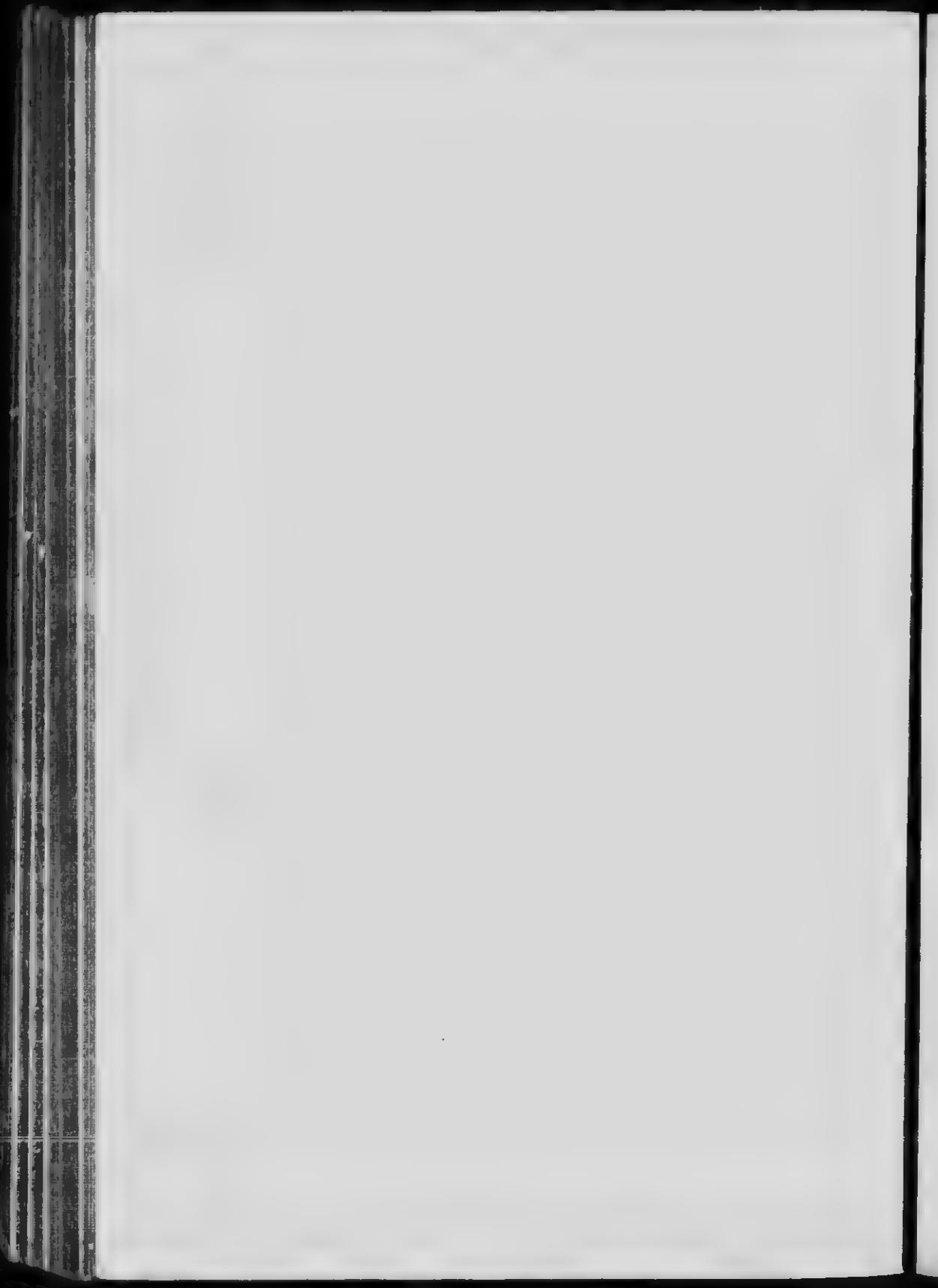
If we hadn't felt already that Long Island was one big haven, we should have begun to feel it at Easthampton. When I say "haven," I mean a sort of hearth and home for weary voyagers, you know, for this Island *does* give you the impression of having more heart than most places. Perhaps this is because (despite all the Indian fighting and battles of the Revolution) it was from the beginning of its civilization the bourne of homemakers. And, anyhow, when people did horrid things here in the past they prayed about them devoutly; they didn't build their dining-halls over the dungeons, and comfortably feast while their prisoners starved!

But about Easthampton. There's absolutely noth-



LONG ISLAND—SOUTH SHORE

"Artists would find a paradise of queer, cozy gables, and corners of gardens crowded with old-fashioned flowers."



ing like it on the other side of the water, not even in Devonshire or Dorset, where the seashore villages are so lovely. Perhaps he will change his mind to-morrow, but to-day Jack says Easthampton is the prettiest place he ever saw.

I wonder if I can make *you* see what it's like? Perhaps you may see with your mind's eye, but I'm afraid for Monty it's hopeless, as he's never been to America, where everything is so completely different from other countries. Easthampton could be described in several ways by several people, and they would all be right. A history lover would see dignified ghosts of Indian chiefs treating with prim Puritans driven from New England by grim religious dissensions. He would see the best whaling-boats of the New World being made. He would people the oldest shingled houses with families whose possessions are now stored in the picturesque museum. "This place of dreams belongs to the past," he would say, feeling pleasantly sad as he stood by the Great Pond, gazing at irresponsible, intensely modern ducks. Artists would find a paradise of queer, cozy gables, and corners of gardens crowded with old-fashioned flowers that matter more than all the ancient books in the museum library. They would remember Easthampton for the green velvet moss and golden lichen on its ancient roofs, the faint rainbow tints in the old, old glass of its tiny window-panes; for the pink hollyhocks painted against backgrounds of dove-gray shingles; for its sky of peculiar hyacinth blue like a vast cup inverted over wide-stretching golden sands. They would remember gray windmills striding along those sands like a procession of tall monks with arms lifted in

benediction; whereas the summer girls and their summer young men would think of the charming, glorified cottages with their awnings and verandas and lovely lawns and masses of blue and pink hydrangeas; also of the big and jolly hotel where we are staying to-night. (The Hamptons wouldn't have done for *them* in old days when men and maids—"persons of the younger sort"—were hauled up before the courts if they were out after nine o'clock!) While the picture for children would be of a shining beach smooth as silk, and immense lengths of white waves, marching rank after rank in an endless army, with deep rolling music of unseen drums.

You may take your choice of these Hamptons, or like me you may say, "I'll have them all, please!"

Anyhow, you enter beside the Great Pond I told you of, which is so charming in itself and in its flat frame of village green that it deserves the capital G and P it's always spelt with. I do believe if you dared begin it with little letters you'd be driven out of town, and not with "'Fruites,' and corn, and coates," as the Indians were invited to leave in their day. *They* had a nice well, in a green plain, perhaps where the Great Pond is now, for all I know. There's an old Indian Bible which tells about it, when the Montauks—a fine brave tribe who sold out *dirt* cheap to the Puritans—lived in their village, which is still commemorated by the name Amagansett. (By the way, I promised Jack to tell Monty that "sett" means meeting-place, which explains why "sett" is the tag end of so many village names here.)

As I said, you come to the Great Pond, and you feel ashamed of being in a motor car, though hundreds of

other people are equally guilty. It's all so green and sweet and peaceful, that speed seems a crime. The street, if you can call it a street, is as broad as a generous mind. Never was an English village-green as perfect as this, I suppose because the self-banished English folk who created it worked from an idealized picture treasured in their hearts. And there are old gray and white houses as beautiful as houses in dreams, and pretty new houses which carefully contrive not to look out of keeping with the old ones. Also there are windmills, sketched on clear open backgrounds—windmills which the English settlers didn't mind copying from the Dutch on the other side of the Island.

Now can you fancy what Easthampton is like? But even if you can, you'll never, never smell (unless you pack up and come here) the wonderful fragrance of salt sea and sweet flowers which I shall always have in my mind's nostrils (why can't one have nostrils as well as eyes in one's mind?) when I think of this place. And oh, I nearly forgot to tell you about that great feature, the museum and library, though we spent two hours browsing in it, and "musing" (appropriate word for Easthampton!) by the fountain in its garden. They've made the building look as Elizabethan as though it had been shipped from Surrey; and its books and pictures and relics are *fascinating*. So are the girls who are the guardians of the place. They are the only young things there.

Luckily it was the one day of the week when people are allowed to go inside the quaintest of the houses in the village (I hate calling it a *town*, though perhaps I ought to), the wee bit hoosie where John Howard Payne lived.

If you don't know that he wrote "Home, Sweet Home," you ought to. It's the dearest little gray nest you can imagine, and I envy the people who own it. No wonder J. H. P. was able to write such a song! But how surprised he'd have been, all the same, if any one had told him that a hundred years or so later crowds of pilgrims would come to worship at that humble shrine!

We had time, after the Payne house, to undertake an adventure. Not that we knew it was going to be an adventure when we started. Jack was responsible for it, he having inflamed his mind by reading overmuch about Montauk Indians and their virtues. Their great stronghold used to be at Montauk Point, a kind of peninsula at the far eastern end of the Island, and Jack wanted to see it. The people at the hotel told us we should find a bad road for motors, but what was that to us, who call ourselves pioneers in the motor world? Bad roads were not in the bright lexicon of our youth, and of course the rest of the party wouldn't back out when that was our attitude. Besides, Mr. Goodrich, the Garden of the Gods giant, put money in an enterprise which expects that ocean liners will some day dock at Montauk Point and so save many hours. He was as keen in his way as Jack was in *his*, though he cared not that brave Montauk Indians had built their places of refuge there in palisaded inclosures.

Well, we set forth gaily, none of us knowing what we were in for, unless it was Peter Storm. I began to think, after certain events, that he must have pushed his inquiries farther than we did, or else, in that lurid past of his, one of the purplest patches was a secret expedition to the end of Montauk Point. I thought at first it was

remarkable of him not only to consent but to applaud the idea that Ed Caspian should lead the way. Earlier, he had seemed to do all he could to spurn and outdistance the Wilmot with the Grayles-Grice. Mr. Caspian is very proud of the Wilmot (though I hear a rumour that he's been taking mysterious lessons how to drive a G.-G.), so proud that he suspected nothing when, without dissent from any quarter, he was allowed to head our procession.

At the start everything was beautiful. Jack was quite entertaining and instructive to the honeymooners and me about the meaning and derivation of the word Montauk which used to be spelled in any old way you liked, from Meantauket (which meant "fortified town") to Muttaag (pillar or ensign), or Manatuck (high land). It seemed that one of the Indians' inclosures, called the New Fort, was still standing in 1662, when Long Island was beginning to think itself quite smart and civilized. That was nice to learn, practically on the spot. We were chatting about the few Indians who exist to this day on Long Island (rather mixed up with negroes) and admiring the gorgeous golden dunes, and gorgeouser goldener gorse when suddenly bump! bump! The moderately bad road became immoderately awful. At this spot some disillusioned motorist had revengefully printed on a proud signpost the classic words: "Damn Bad Road." We were forced to believe him. And at that instant, as if to emphasize the description, millions of mosquitoes the size of hummingbirds attacked us. How the Indians stood them, goodness knows, but perhaps they put up with the pests because they helped keep off the enemy.

All the females of our party uttered uncensored cries, demanding retreat at any price; but Ed Caspian, hearing these wails, turned upon us with taunts. Close behind him came the Grayles-Grice, Peter Storm at the wheel. "Let the ladies come into my car, Mr. Storm," said he, "and they won't notice the jolts."

"Certainly, if they like," Peter consented.

"We *don't* like, thanks!" replied all the Goodrich giantesses as one. Pat didn't answer, but had the air of a captain intending to sink with the ship.

"Oh, very well, *I* shall see this through," remarked our noble leader. "One can go anywhere with a Wilmot, even to—the devil!"

That wasn't the way he meant to end his sentence, *bien entendu*. But just then he plumped into a rut like the back door to China or—to the home of that over-painted gentleman inadvertently mentioned.

We've all learned in Latin how easy is the descent to the *second* abode, but if we hadn't had it sufficiently impressed on our young minds how difficult it is to get out again, we should have had an object lesson watching the Wilmot. *Will-not* would have been a better name, if you don't mind a pun, for it simply wouldn't and—*didn't*. There it was, stuck in ruts of sand worse than Jack and I ever said bad words about in the Sahara. Ed Caspian and his chauffeur did what the German Kaiser used to say he'd do to win a Cowes yacht race—his damnedest. The engine groaned and snorted. You could almost see sweat starting from every valve. Nothing doing but noise! Naturally we were all delighted, because pride and falls go so well together when they're other people's;

while as for the poor Hippopotamus, it looked *weeks* younger, in a minute!

Finally, in the midst of a roar that would have turned an elephant green with envy, the Wilmot's teeth were torn from their sockets—I mean the gears were stripped. That was the end; and all our men, looking hypercritically helpful, ran to the rescue. But there wasn't any rescue. When everything good had been tried and everything bad said, we had to leave. The Wilmot was left to the mercy of the mosquitoes. Ed Caspian was taken aboard the good ship Grayles-Grice, and Jack and I adopted the chauffeur. Our cars backed out of the worst ruts, and it was a long time before we could turn. There, on the way to Montauk Point, the Wilmot remains to this hour, for it was too late to do anything when we got home to the hotel. I wouldn't "put it past" those mosquitoes to suck off all the paint in the night!

Just here in my budget I was interrupted. Pat tiptoed into the sitting-room, spying my rose-light on the balcony, and whispering my name like a password.

I told you, didn't I, that there was pretty sure to be news at half-past midnight? There is—such funny news, entirely different from what I expected!

Peter Storm and Ed Caspian both got telegrams. Peter Storm couldn't understand his. It said, "Can't recall him immediately, but will day after to-morrow. Most inconvenient to have him here now. This will give you one clear day to try your hand on other car."

The mysterious message was signed "L. Shuster," and it was given to Peter as he was about to dance with Pat (it seems he can dance), and seeing him look puzzled she

asked politely if anything were wrong. He said he didn't know, and showed her the telegram. She could make no more of it than he could. Then Mr. Caspian appeared with a telegram in his hand. "Have you a wire from Mrs. Shuster?" he wanted to know. Peter didn't deny the soft impeachment. "I'm just wondering," blundered Ed, "if by any chance the lady was absent-minded and mixed the messages? Some one talking to her while she wrote, perhaps. Will you let me have a look at yours?"

Peter let him have a look; in fact, they exchanged; and Peter read in the one apparently intended for Ed: "Please come home day after to-morrow. Find I need you. L. Shuster."

"I think this is mine," said Ed.

"And probably this is intended for me," said Peter. "Was it the Grayles-Grice you thought of trying your hand on?"

"I told Mrs. Shuster I could drive it for Miss Moore, rather than break up the party if she needed you. She was to let us know—when her plans were settled," explained Ed. And Patsey says he stammered.

"After that affair of the Wilmot this afternoon I shouldn't like to advise Miss Moore to exchange chauffeurs, even for one day," said Peter. "Mrs. Shuster's very good-natured. I expect she'll wait. If not, she can fill my place with some one else, permanently."

Pat was amused, though I'm not sure she understood the little play of cross-purposes as well as I understand it. And she doesn't seem to attach any importance to that part of the telegram which is the most exciting, to *my* idea. *Why* would it be inconvenient for our fair Lilv

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to have her secretary return to-morrow? Something is up at Kidd's Pines! I vaguely suspected as much when she let us come away without her. When Jack wakes I shall ask him what he thinks. Love,

Your affectionate

MOLLY.

P. S. Jack thinks something so wild and woolly that I daren't tell you what it is till I know, for fear he's wrong. Much less will I tell Pat. And we can't know for two or three days unless we abbreviate the trip which all of us would hate to do.

## VII

EDWARD CASPLAN TO MRS. L. SHUSTER

*Easthampton,  
Wednesday morning.*

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I know you mean well, and I don't like to scold, but really, *really* I have a big bone to pick with you! I didn't ask you to *telegraph*. I said *telephone*. I wonder if you ought to consult an aurist, dear lady? And even if you did misunderstand, you might have concentrated on what you were doing for *five* minutes, don't you think? I don't wish to be disagreeable, but what you have done has given me a sleepless night. Several other things have gone wrong, too, but this is the worst, because I'm not sure what the consequences may be. Add to not sleeping the fact that I'm up at an unearthly hour in order to write to you, and to hear news of my Wilmot (which had an accident yesterday), and you will excuse me if I don't trim my sentiments with roses.

Almost the last words you said to me were, "One good turn deserves another." I did you a good turn in speaking of you in a *certain* way to a *certain* person, as you asked me to do. It was a pleasure to serve you, because of the gratitude owing you for many past kindnesses when life was something of a struggle for me. Still, you seemed to think the other day that I had paid a good part of the debt,

and that it was up to you now. I don't think I should have asked the favour I did ask, if you hadn't offered. We were both pretty frank about what we wanted, and after what passed I felt I could count on you, as you could count on me.

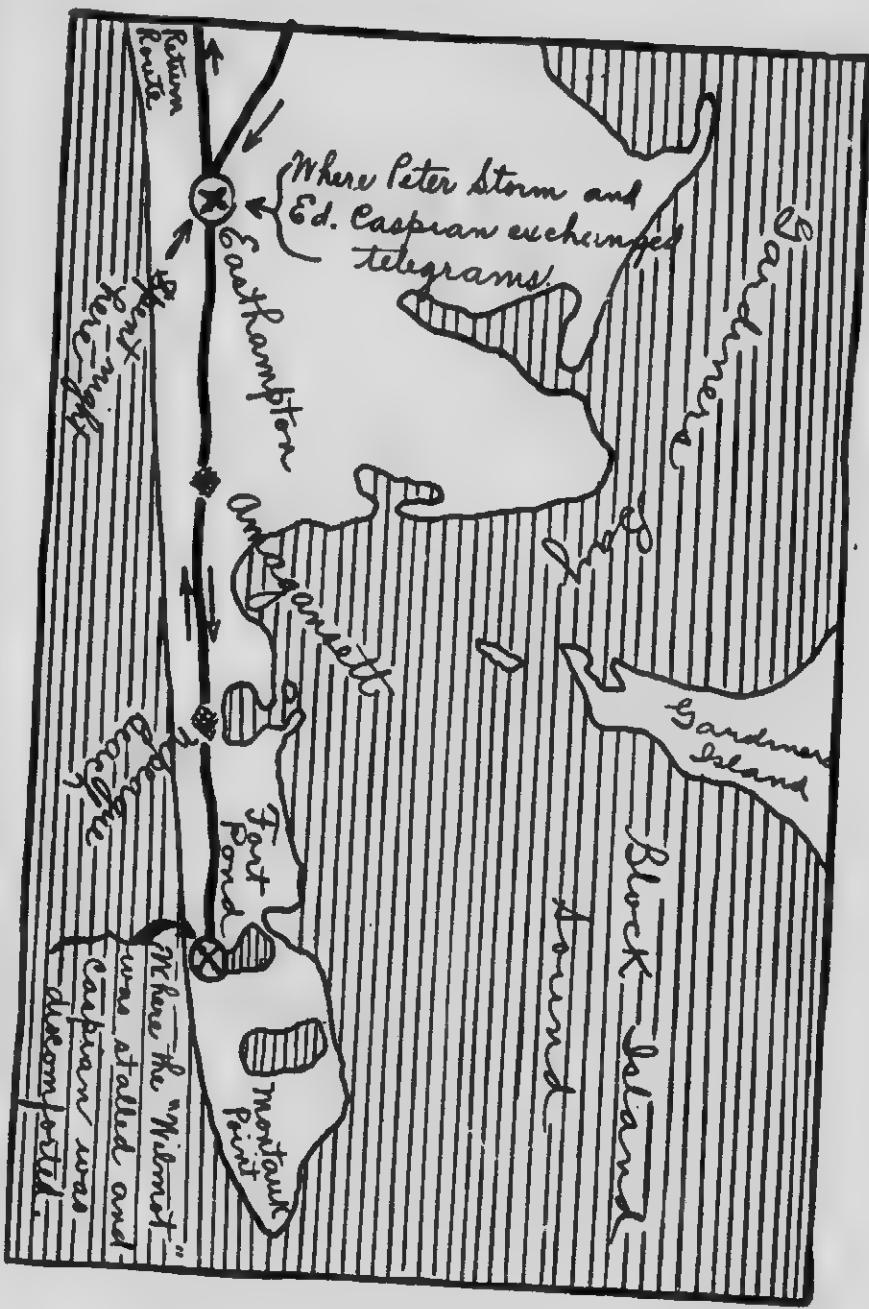
All the evening after I'd come in from a disgusting and pointless expedition I expected to be called to the telephone. There was a dance at the hotel which I was unable to enjoy, as I have never learned any of the new dances, and some girls seem to have little appreciation of the higher pleasure of sitting out with a partner of intelligence, not to mention money. By the way, not only did I owe an exceedingly unpleasant adventure with my car to Captain Winston's obstinate determination to see Montauk Point (where there's nothing to see), but I owe him another grudge for upsetting my plans for the night. At dinner, casting his eye round the dining-room, he happened to remark that none of the young men present looked tall enough to act as partners for those beanpole Goodrich girls. "Beanpole" is *my* expression, not his. "Storm is the right size," he went on meddlesomely, in that calm British way he has of taking it for granted that whatever *he* says must be right. "I wonder if Storm dances?"

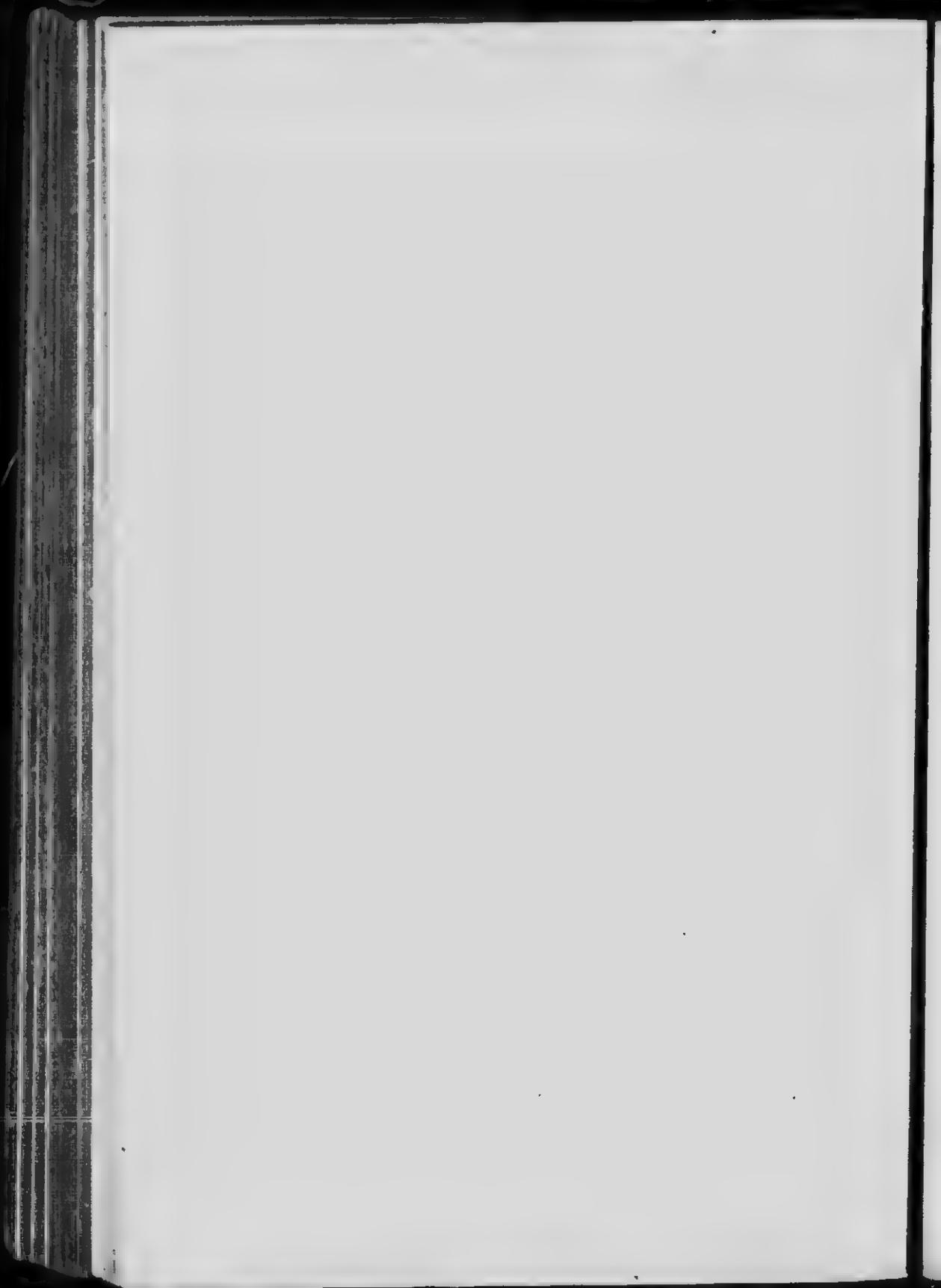
Your errant secretary was dining at another table, by himself, and at some distance from the tables of the rest of the party, who were grouped together in order to talk across. Miss Moore was with the Winstons, and chairs had been reserved for the Morleys; but Mrs. Morley was tired and didn't come down; of course the bridegroom kept her company upstairs; and I was just in time to ask if

I might have one of the vacant places, before two of those dreadful boys made a rush for the table. When Miss Moore heard Winston's question about Storm she looked up, apparently in surprise; for though you have made him your secretary and he has been a good deal spoiled by every one at Kidd's Pines and those Awepesha people, *she* first saw him, you must remember, in his own class of life as a steerage passenger. It must have seemed queer that Winston should expect the man to dance with girls like her and the Goodriches. Naturally she didn't put her surprise into words. She is too kind-hearted.

If Storm had any conception of what his sphere in society ought to be, he would, when asked, have answered, "*I don't* dance." He need not have lied and said, "*I can't.*" His conceit is such, however, that he hadn't the grace to keep out of the limelight when it suited his purpose to pose in it. He did dance, not only with the Goodrich girls, but with Miss Moore. Perhaps you can understand why I told you that his being along would spoil this trip for me, and why I asked you as a particular favour to recall him on the excuse of urgent business. I can now drive a Grayles-Grice very well, certainly as well as he can; and my chauffeur could have run him back to you at Kidd's Pines in the Wilmot.

While I was momentarily expecting a 'phone call, a telegram was brought to me in the ballroom, where I was sitting out some new-fangled thing everybody seemed idiotically wild over. The envelope was addressed to me all right, but I couldn't make head or tail of what was inside until suddenly it popped into my head that you'd been absent-minded and mixed Storm and me. It seemed





almost too bad to be true. And worse than all, Storm was in the act of studying his message with the assistance of Miss Moore. Of course he'd got on to the guiding idea, and probably put her on to it also. The fat is thoroughly in the fire now. Even though I still expect to get news about the man which will queer his pitch considerably (as I prophesied to you), there may be a lingering resentment in Miss Moore's mind against me. She is apt to think, from what Storm will have put into her head, that I might have minded my own business. Little difference is it likely to make with her that I have been and am acting for her good! In that connection, *you* were more sensible! You refused to discharge the man without proof, but you did pay my judgment the compliment of changing your attitude toward him. Now, however, it seems to me you have a perfectly good excuse to get rid of him permanently, without regard to my possible discoveries. Apparently he doesn't intend to obey your order to return, but is determined at any cost to go on to the end, playing the gentleman of leisure who can drive a high-powered motor car while he's being paid for addressing envelopes! A bitter end may it be for him! I shouldn't wonder if it would be. I shall do my best to make it so. It will come at the Piping Rock Club, where I have got an invitation for the members of this party for a dance. If Storm has the cheek to go, his blood be on his own head! The dance is, as Miss Moore says, the "climax" of our tour. I hope it may be so for Storm in *one* sense of the word, though not in hers.

I have told you before that I can get you a better secretary than he is, at a day's notice; and perhaps you will

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presently be willing to let me try, now his "eyes alone" don't seem worth the money, as you once thought them. Other eyes are of more importance to you in these days. Apropos of the latter eyes, I understand why it may have been inconvenient to let Storm come back, but certainly he couldn't have been as much in your way in a big house as he is in mine in a motor car.

I shall travel in the Grayles-Grice in spite of him, as the Wilmot is out of the running for days. But the trip is spoilt.

I felt I must let you know how your mistake has affected me. But I have not ceased to be

Sincerely your friend,

E. CASPIAN.

P.S. I am wiring you to send him on the proos of the new peace tract to correct on the way. That may keep him out of the car a few hours.

## VIII

### PATRICIA MOORE TO ADRIENNE DE MONCOURT

*Long Island,  
At a Beautiful House  
Where We Are Guests.*

MIGNONNE:

You cannot figure to yourself how the life is wonderful, just after one has thought, "Crack! the sky tumbles!" But yes, you can figure it, because of your adventure at Easter.

I am almost too happy. I live in a story of fairies, and I ask myself, is it too good to last?

You know, chérie, how I loved always to read the books of romance, when we could hide them from our kind Sisters, who think it wrong for the young girls to fill their heads with such thoughts till after the marriage. Since I have left the dear convent, I have read earnestly in journals the writings of critics who live by having opinions about other people. I see by them that romance is not truth. It is only the dull things which are real. Yet for you and me, life is now running like the stories at which these critics laugh the most. That is why I ask myself, "Can such things go on?" For it seems that critics must know better than me (or should I say "I?"). Perhaps they have reason. Perhaps we shall end in a monotony of grayness like the books these wise men and women praise for "the

realism." Or we shall fall down, down, in tragedy?—for that, it seems, can also be true to life; only just the *happy* things are not true. Yet at present let us live joyously for a little while as in one of those dear books we read in secret at school: books of romance and even of mystery.

For instance, look at what you write me of your family, which mixes itself so strangely with my experience. But no, surely it *cannot* be that the handsome new American cousin with much money, who visited your mother's château in your vacance of Easter, is anything to *our* Monsieur Moncourt. It is only a coincidence that his name shall be Marcel, and that Marcel is a name existing with the de Moncourt men since the centuries. I regret almost that I have written you of our Marcel Moncourt just at the moment when this marvellous cousin has jumped into your life; but, even if there is a connection, you must not comprehend it badly. Do not for an instant picture that our Monsieur Moncourt is a *cook*. But, what a *word* for him! He is a real Personage. He is a Celebrity. All the world is proud to speak with him, and he can have as much money as he wants. That is why it is so curious he should come to *us* for a little nothing at all, just through the influence of Mr. Storm, which also I do not understand. But, as I tell you, if there is a cousinhood or an unclehood, it is not a thing for shame. The young Marcel will of course tell Madame la Marquise everything the moment he passes so far as to ask for you. And then, if he is so rich and so beau, and has the blood of the de Moncourts in his veins, what does the rest matter? If I were in your place, dear Adrienne, I would not

worry on the idea that our Moncourt may be this *mauvais sujet* of a Paul Jean Honoré Marcel de Moncourt you mention, who vanished in his youth, and has so long been counted as dead. Probably that one is quite altogether dead, and our Moncourt has no lines with the *de Moncourts* of France. He perhaps took the name because it has a noble sound. That is one of the things one doesn't ask a man, is it not? But if it is important for your happiness, my Adrienne, I can perhaps arrive at it through Mr. Storm, who must know all, and learn, too, if there is a son of our Moncourt we have not heard of yet.

And now for myself again!

It is so gay and such an amusement to have a whole band of young men paying attentions to me, little me, who but the other day did not even raise the eyes to a man in taking promenades, without a bad mark on my conduct! Larry does not object at all. He laughs. Girls are born to love the flirt, he says, and indeed, dear Adrienne, he loves it himself! He makes it with all the ladies, even the fat Mrs. Shuster of whom I have written. But that is his manner. I do not inquiet myself for him, not more than he does for me.

At present he is at home, because, though he is a great boy, he has you can't think what a sense of duty. It is for this he stays at Kidd's Pines to welcome new visitors while I am away *en automobile* with some of our guests, and chaperoned by dear Molly Winston.

Apropos, it is Molly Winston who gives me courage that life can after all be full of pleasant things and good endings, for she and Jack go on having romance and grand adventures. She believes that if "*you want things enough,*"

they come to you sooner or later. She is a very nice chaperon to have.

Three dear boys are in love with me, not enough to hurt them, but enough to make me pleasure and themselves, too, all fighting together and pretending to be angry if I am more kind to one than another. Also there is always Mr. Caspian. He has now asked me what we used to call "*The question*"; and in America it is done to the girl herself, as we so often read, not to the father or mother. But, it seems, he spoke first to Larry, almost in the French way. When I have answered no, I was too young (that is the best to say when you are caught by surprise and wish not to offend). He told me that Larry wished me to think of him, because they had made up a big friendship, they two, and there were deep reasons why I should engage myself. I went to Larry to inquire of this, and he said he did not go so far as Mr. Caspian thought. However, it would be good for me to be nice to Mr. C. and not make him sorrow, for a time, until some things were settled. So I am being nice, but sometimes it is difficult, because Mr. Caspian and Mr. Storm are not sympathetic. Still, don't you find the little difficulties in the life are like the cloves and cinnamon in the rice pudding which we at school asked for in a "Round Robin?" (Oh, that nice word! We found it, you remember, in an English book!)

Mr. Storm drives my darling car, with which we make many dollars from our visitors who love to go on tour. I am considered too small, though I can do it quite well and have no fear. In smooth places without turns Mr. Storm lets me take the wheel. I cannot talk when I drive.

I am too happy and have a thousand emotions, like a beehive filled with bees that keep flying home with honey. But he can talk, no matter what happens, and he says things I remember. They seem to paint my brain with pictures which he gives me to keep. So his words are like his eyes, not to be forgotten. You know in our garden at the convent there were flowers which would not be banished, though the gardener pulled them up by the roots again and still again: poppies for instance. Some thoughts which come to one from other people's minds are like these. They persist, and they plant their seeds in a deep place where they cannot be pulled out.

Mr. Caspian is like the gardener at the convent. He tries to stamp out these thoughts, to plant others in me. But the roots have gone down where he cannot find them.

He has come into our automobile, because his own is broken and being mended at Easthampton, where we stayed a night, and I danced with Peter Storm. I let Mr. Caspian come, instead of saying he had better go with the boys in their car, the Hippopotamus, because of Larry asking me to be nice. But I do not let him drive ever—except to-day when I am not in the car, as you shall hear. It is too pleasant having Peter by me when I have to cry, "Oh, what a lovely place!" or, "See the wonderful view!" or, "Here is a funny sight!" He has a mood which matches mine, and it would not be so with Mr. Caspian. I do not know why, but Mr. Caspian reminds me of an iron fence. You could drape him with pretty flowers, but underneath there would always be the iron fence. Perhaps Peter Storm may be a stone wall under the ivy and blossoming things. But stone is part of nature, and has

beautiful colours deep in it, soaked in from sunsets and sunrises and rainbows through thousands of centuries.

All the things I see as we travel in the car—fast as a glorious strong wind which blows past the beauties of earth—all the things I see are more *emphasized* when I have Peter sitting by me, seeing them, too. That is why life is so wonderful. I feel things in *double*, as with two souls. Yet of course I am not in love. Do not think that, or you will be wrong. It is my intellect which is waking up, after it was kept in pink cotton by the Sisters; for you know learning school lessons does not wake up our intellect. It only puts on a bright polish, so by and by it can reflect the world when it's out of the cotton. And, oh, it is a sweet world, here in the country that is my home!

By and by I will tell you about the house where we are now, and a kind of mystery which gives the fairy-story effect. But you would not know what these days have been if I left out the tale of our travelling. I sent you a fat envelope of postcards, as I promised, with pictures of Easthampton: the windmills and the old houses, and the big waves. You will like the one of the long fierce wave like a white cat's paw. They call it the "sea puss." I hoped it meant that really: a giant cat that seized bathers, and people far up the beach as if they were mice running away. But Captain Winston, who loves the history as we love the bonbons, says no, they have only *stolen* that name for a great tidal wave which sweeps in from the sea on this side of our island. It was in Indian days but a meek little word: "seepus," small river.

The postcards of Southampton are all pictures of beautiful new houses which rich people have built among



"Southampton's soul is very, very old, full of memories of Indians"



the dunes. I could not get old ones, though Southampton's soul is very, very old, full of memories of Indians and early English settlers who were jealous of the Dutch. Now it is a colony of "cottages" bigger than many of our French châteaux, and of the most unexpected, charming shapes, covered with flowers. Girls and boys who like to dance and have fun all summer like it better than Easthampton, so their mothers have to like it better, too. You will not believe when you look at the pictures that not three hundred years ago, if there had been postcards then, you would have seen only forty rough log-houses built behind palisades for fear of Indians; maybe the watch-house was where the Country Club is now! Instead of dances and parties the only pleasure was to go to church, where you were called by the roll of a drum. A stern man named Thomas Sayres beat on the drum and you had to go whether you liked or not, because Abraham Pierson, the first minister, governed the state as well as church.

I am not sure even the Indians weren't nicer to live with, because they liked beads and bright things, as we do, especially mirrors. Why, they sold anything they *had* for mirrors! And they were kind and pleasant till the Dutch and English spoilt their dispositions. *Their* parties—yes, they *had* parties!—were in their cornfields—oh, miles of beautiful cornfields that are covered with dark mysterious cedars now, like sad thoughts of the sunny past. The Indian families came to help each other in the cornfields, and the young men fell in love with the maidens and proposed as they do at our dances. If you said "no," perhaps they knocked you hard on your head, and took you

anyhow! I am pleased it is not so now. I should not like Mr. Caspian to do it.

He was very nice, though, at Southampton, and asked to have the Grayles-Grice stop at one of the shops (the most *fascinating* shops, like at Vichy and Aix where your dear mother took us the summer before the war). There he bought wonderful bonbons—candies. I ate only one, and the Goodrich girls the rest.

You will like the picture I send of the cottage which has been built on to a windmill. I should love to have that. There are lots more windmills, soft and gray and fluffy-looking, like Persian pussy cats sitting up in the dunes; so maybe I shall have one some of these days.

We saw some lovely roads in France when we motored with Madame la Marquise, but we were never on any road quite so sweet (I have to say sweet, it is a right word!) as the road of the Shinnecock Hills. We curved so much among the dunes, I was not allowed to drive, though it was easy as flying in a dream; and the dunes were the colour dunes would be in dreams: gold and silver mingled with warm blue shadows. They had a look of gold and blue flame in fires made of driftwood, because the sun was so bright on them that day, and if you screwed up your eyes to peer through your eyelashes, there was a rose tint with the gold and purple splashes in the sea, like tails of drowned peacocks. You know it is like putting on magic spectacles to peep at the world that way. Peter Storm told me how to do it.

He tells me many things, queer little things and queer big ones, because he has "knocked about the world" and learned them for himself. He does not think he will ever

settle down to be happy in one place; but he likes Long Island to rest in while he takes a long breath. He says what I call its "sweetness" comes from having two Ice Ages that have given it a "legacy" of small soft hills and harbours made before men were born or thought of.

I suppose the Ice Ages made the Shinnecock Hills, though they look as young as I do, and as happy. Captain Winston, who loves Indian names, says "Shinnecock" really means "plain, or flat place." But never mind, there has been time enough since the hills were named to mix things up! And most people care more about talking "golf" in this part of the world than of Indian times; for there is a wonderful golf club close by. Mr. Storm will teach me to play, and already we begin; but I have not come to that part of my news yet.

I cannot think the Ice Ages had much to do with one of the things most charming which make the character of Long Island: I mean duck ponds. Oh, but the most enchanting duck ponds you could sit for days to watch! And the ducks are not looking like the dull ducks of every day, in other places of the world. They are most elaborate ducks, and their ponds are full of sky and clouds you'd think they would stumble over when they swim: bright, laughing ponds like eyes in the landscape.

Now, would you believe a village called "Quogue" could be pretty? It is as if croaked by a frog. But there was a fairy story I remember, where every time the frog croaked (he was a prince cursed into a frog's skin by a bad godmother) jewels fell out of his mouth. So one could imagine it had been with Quogue: and the jewels turned into beautiful houses. The houses are very old now; that

is, old for America, which makes them more beautiful. It is only the middle-aged houses that are not beautiful here, and that is true all over the world perhaps; for people had a terrible cramp in their sense of beauty fifty years ago.

Quogue is on one of those lovely inlets the Ice Ages kindly made. Quantock Bay has not a sound of romance, but when you know that it means "long tidal stream" you hear it differently ever after. And it is fun to find out that "Quogue" is all the years haven't nibbled off the word "quohaug," a name the Indians gave to a great, round, purple-shelled clam they loved.

It makes me sad to think of the poor Indians chased from the places and the things they loved on this island. Even when you motor over these velvet smooth roads, and pass fine modern places as at Southampton and dreamy old ones at Quogue, and cottages pretty and modest as violets, on the way through the woods to Westhampton, you can't put out of your head the thought of Indians and their trails through the forests. It is a thought like a dim background of ghosts in a picture where the foreground is bright and gay.

I almost cried at *déjeuner* yesterday when Captain Winston told about Henry Hudson and the happy, kind tribe of the Canarsies—in 1609, three hundred and seven years ago this spring. They were so pleased when he came sailing into Gravesend Bay in his little ship the *Half Moon* (that is on another part of Long Island, not where I write of), and they put on their best clothes of animals' skins and mantles made of brilliant feathers, to go and meet the men from "another world." They took presents of green

tobacco and furs, and made feasts to honour their visitors. But a man named John Colman admired their most beautiful woman too much, and was shot by an arrow. After that they all fought, and a great many Indians were killed, and they got to think that every European was treacherous. If you, dear Adrienne, could see a place called Coney Island, it would seem funny to you that John Colman (who liked the Indian girl too well) should be buried there. It is not at all a place to be buried in; and he feels that, for his ghost walks at night. What a wonder they do not hire it for a side show! The story of John Colman is not the only romance Captain Winston has found in the old books. There are lots, but the nicest one happened in the Shinnecock part I have told you of: the romance of the Indian Water Serpent, who avenged the murder of a white girl, Edith Turner, who nursed him to life when he was dying. Water Serpent travelled for months, tracking a man who stabbed and threw her in the water of Peconic Bay. Through marshes and forests he went, and at last he tired the murderer out. Then he left him dead with a dagger in his heart, the same dagger that killed Edith. After that there was nothing left for Water Serpent to love, so he starved himself to death, and died on Edith's grave. Do you believe there are white men who can love like that?

All this side of the Island has Indian names, though on the other they are more English; a few English names here, too, of course, only it is the Indian ones you remember best, they are so queer. And it seems right, in memory of the Indians, that many roads are cut through lovely woods. Could you forget names like "Speonk" and "Moriches?" I know you could not forget the woods either, if you saw

them once, or the perfume of the pines and the yellow lilies growing wild. Even they had an Indian name, Captain Winston says, or their roots had: "sebon" or "shubun"; and the legend is that the lilies are the spirits of Indian children who come back each spring to their old playgrounds.

There is another thing they say, too: if you travel along this sandy road (it's really part of the big sandbar which makes Fire Island—Fire Island that walls in the South Bay)—if you travel by moonlight, or come on the road between Moriches and Bellport, you can see prints of naked feet, one straight in front of the other, as the Indians used to walk; and they are not the feet of Europeans. I like those tales; and the ways through the woods (even where there are villages, like one I loved, called "Watermill") are so romantic, it would be more strange *not* to have Indian ghosts!

Bellport I *could* not pass through without stopping, because of the curiosity shops. I had not much money to buy things, but I wanted to look. So the procession stopped; and the three boys we call Tom, Dick, and Harry—the ones who love me—clubbed together and bought me an old black japanned tea tray with flowers painted on it. Their hearts would have been in broken pieces if I had said no, I could not take it. So I said "yes, thank you!" and that put me into trouble, because then Mr. Caspian bought me something also: a tiny model of an old whaling ship. It was perfect, and cost a great deal. I knew, because I had asked the price and he had heard me. But what could I do? I was thinking what to say, when the wife of the shop man rushed up and reminded him that

the model was engaged, and could not be sold to this gentleman. That gave me time to finish thinking! I said no one must buy me anything else, so I was in time to stop Mr. Caspian from giving me a fat silver watch of the time of the Georges. It would have gone well with our house, but I should not have liked it from him. He thumped the watch down when I refused, and Mr. Storm bought it under his nose. I will tell you by and by what happened about it and the model ship.

We took our *déjeuner* at a place of the queerest name of all; or, no, it was the lake that has the name; we were in a restaurant on the shore, with a flowery terrace shaded by pines. Could you pronounce the word "Ronkonkoma," if nobody told you how, and you had not Indian ancestors haunting your heart? When we were at our tables—two, drawn near together—Peter Storm called out that Mrs. Winston offered a prize for the person getting the right pronunciation. She knew, because her husband had learned it in some book. We all tried, and Mr. Caspian and I spoke it the same way—at least, it sounded to me the same. But Molly made Peter Storm umpire (that means a person who decides when there is a dispute; and is hated if in baseball or football), and Peter decided for me, because I put the emphasis in the right place—"Ronkonkoma." What do you suppose the prize was? The fat watch I had wanted! It seemed that Peter (I would not call him Peter to his face) had bought it for Molly. And I may as well tell you at this same time, she gave me the ship for a present that evening. It was for my birthday, she explicated. Though it was passed by some weeks, she had wanted to find a thing I liked; and she had gone be-

hind the back of Mr. Caspian to bargain with the shop woman, so it could be a surprise. She knew it would be spoiled to come through Mr. Caspian. I shall not dare to put the ship at home where he can see, but it will be in my room, where he can never come. His face looked so cross about the watch of the Georges! I couldn't help to be pleased.

If Peter Storm were not the man he is, above caring much for girls, maybe I should think he had arranged these two things to happen with the help of Molly. But that is not possible. It would only be a great conceit of mine.

We had quite a splendid *déjeuner* at the lake of the prize name, with Blue Point oysters, which you will have heard of because they are of an importance like royalties. They are born close by Ronkonkoma Lake, at a place named after them. I will not say they are named after it!

When we started again, I was allowed to drive for miles—not ordinary common miles, but a spin through a kind of motor heaven ruled by the god of "Things as They Ought to Be." I think his name in America is Billiken. It quite belongs to him, though he inspired a mortal to make the road forty-five miles! You will have to do it in your head in kilometres. The Parkway (they call it) is private, and you pay to go through—only a very little, though it is worth much for the joy. There is no dust and no crowd and no noise, and no policemen springing out like Jacks from boxes; and they let you go forty miles an hour. It is a pity to rush so fast, though, unless you turn and go back again, because the fun is over too soon. Besides, there is scenery of every kind. One would say they had

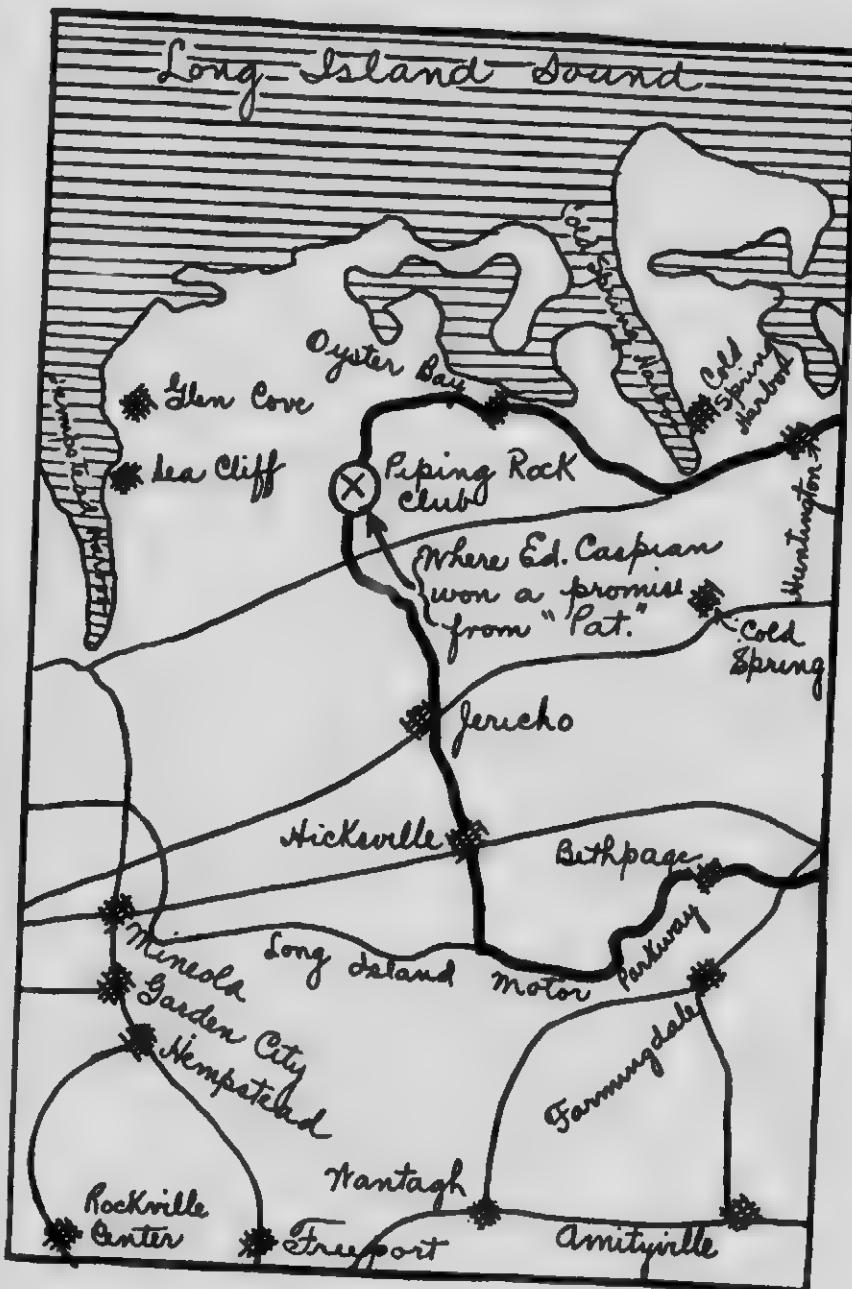
brought bits from every part of the world. There are woods, dark perfumy pines, and white birches like bridal processions of young girls in white. There are hills and rocks, with emerald ferns, and wild flowers almost like Switzerland; and gorse, and fragrant shrubs which must be like the "maquis" they tell you of in Corsica. There are meadows lovely as lawns, and glimpses of blue water like nymphs' eyes suddenly opening from enchanted sleep, perhaps to close when you have gone! I hope they do, for I hate to think of everything going on when our backs are turned as when we are there to see, don't you?

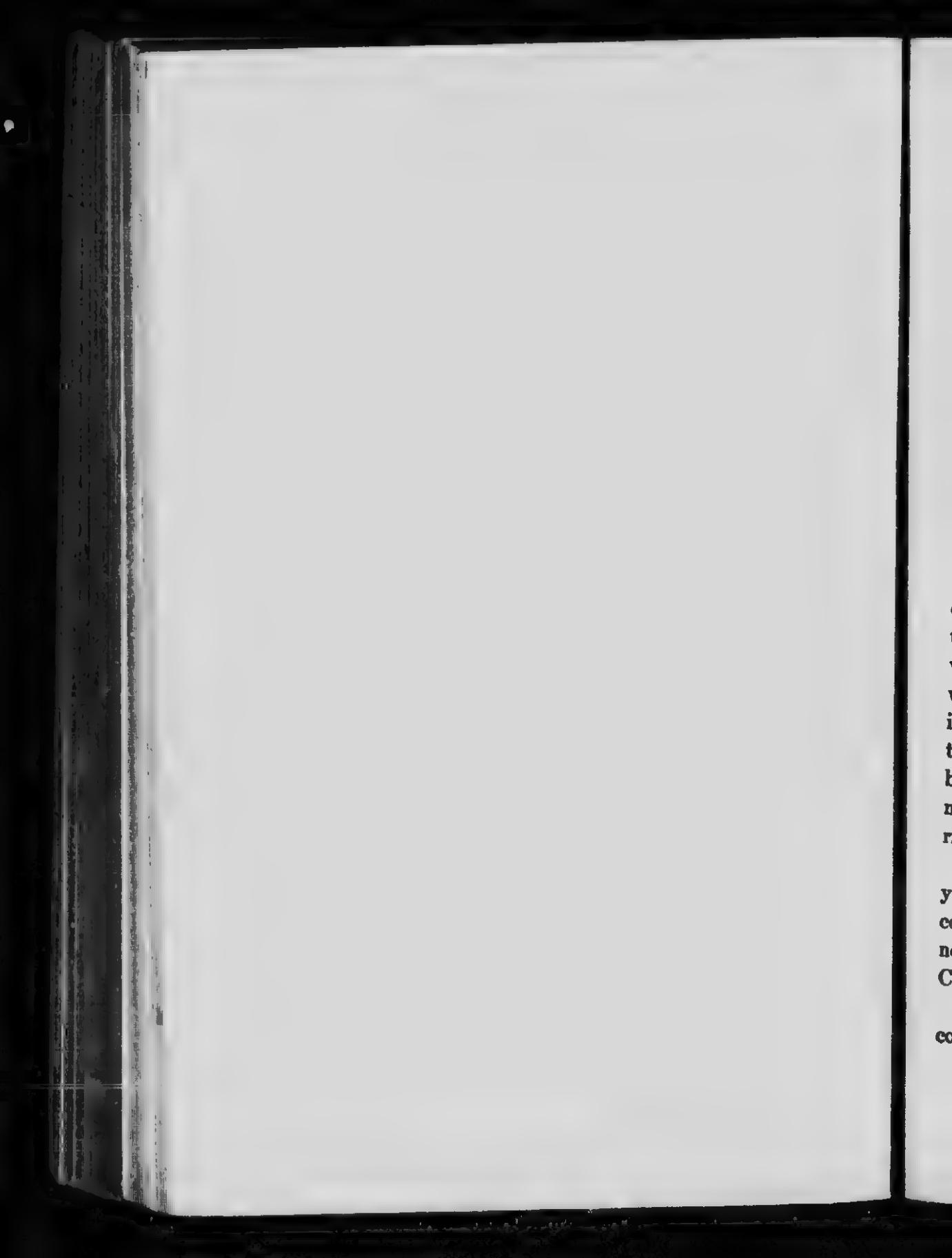
I could have cried when we came out of the Motor Parkway, and I must give up the wheel because of Mr. Goodrich, who fears I might snap in two pieces at the waist and wreck his family. But it was very pretty country still, so I was soon consoled. It is difficult, wishing to live in so many villages! If I had to choose, I do not see how I could; and Peter says it will be the same with me in New England. But, ma chére, if you could see *Jericho*! I do not mean the one we speak of when we say "I wish I were in Jericho!" but the Jericho of Long Island, where I should love to buy all the beautiful old houses, I could not possibly choose between! I would stay in one after the other, and sit in rocking-chairs rocking back and forth like so many old ladies do. But I should not be old. And I would have a man sitting in another chair, rocking, too. He would look like Peter Storm in some ways—that is, he would have such eyes as Peter's. I cannot take interest in other eyes now, his are so living, and they have *all* the expressions as with ponds which show the moods of the sky. But I would not

say this to another than you, not even to Molly! And speaking of ponds, chérie, on Long Island they carpet them with water lilies, or else with ducks, and sometimes both, beautifully mixed together. For modern ducks to be smart and fashionable must not swim or move about much. If they do, it gives them muscles, and to have muscles, makes tough. How glad I am there are not creatures thinking things like that about me when I play tennis or dance or drive a motor! But ducks do not seem to be bitter about it. They just float through life and smile in that way they have, when they are not waddling slowly in front of motors. By the way, Peter says the "race memory" of ducks and chickens and especially geese (who are clever though misunderstood) is improving so much they do not now always cross a road when a motor car is coming. They begin to remember from their ancestors it is wise to wait.

After Jericho and another sweet place called East Norwich we came close to Oyster Bay. Maybe your new cousin from America has told you about it, and of Mr. Roosevelt, who is one of the heroes of America and has been soldier and President and explorer and a little of everything. He lives at Oyster Bay when he has time to live anywhere. And he is a "great chief," so it is well to have a place called Sagamore Hill. You will see why when you learn more about Indian things, as you will have to do if you marry an American man, you know! I cannot stop to tell you now, because I have come to the mysterious part of my letter; and the only place that matters is the place which is lent us to live in.

We thought only to stay at an hotel, and Mr. Caspian





or Captain Winston would have telegraphed, but Peter Storm said no, there was a nicer plan. For a surprise to us, Marcel Moncourt—our great Marcel!—had asked a man he knew to let us dispose at his house—I mean, of his house. The man was away, but he was of those who will have all things ready for the notice of a moment, if he drops down from the sky upon his servants.

But, my child, it is a wonderful house! Not old, quite new, like the Palace of Aladdin. All that misses is a roc's egg, hanging up in the great hall, unless it is there, disguised in a chandelier from Venice.

Some servants are kept to be ready whatever happens. They are Japanese, which makes even more the fairy-tale effect. Peter Storm gives them orders, for that was arranged with our Marcel, it seems, before we started. We owe this experience to Marcel; but then, we owe Marcel to Mr. Storm; and I think it annoys Mr. Caspian very, very much that it is thanks to Peter we are here. He would like always to be the important one, and he feels it should be his right to be of importance, because (now this is one of the strange things!) the fairy palace was built by a cousin of his—the cousin from whom came all his money. That is really odd, but it is not yet the mysterious part. Now I have just come to it.

From Peter I have heard nothing except what I told you: that the house belongs to a friend of Marcel Moncourt's, who is always away since he owned it and will not let but will lend his place sometimes. From Mr. Caspian I have this story which I write for you.

His cousin, an old man named Stanislaus—only a cousin through a marriage—built the house for his son.

It was to be a surprise birthday present, and it must be so beautiful, with many features and furnishings of other countries, that this young man would consent to settle in it. He liked to wander over the world, and his poor father thought if he could give him in one house all the things he loved the best in far-off lands he might be satisfied. That was pathetic, don't you find? To have the house ready in time the old Stanislaws offered a great sum to an architect who must put that work in front of all other engagements. He did so, but trying to keep his contracts with every one gave him in the end an illness many people in this country have, called nervous prostration. I suppose it is an American disease, as one does not have it elsewhere. That was the first bad luck of the house, but not the last. When it was finished, before even it was named, the old Stanislaws died in a sad way—a way Mr. Caspian said I would not like to hear of; and the son died, too. Mr. Caspian thought the house would come to him with everything else; but no, it had been given by the young Stanislaws to some friend. This friend kept away, and would not even let his name be known; so Mr. Caspian fought to get the place for himself, claiming through the law there must be something wrong. He had hope, for he wished to live there, not liking the west, where the old Stanislaws home was. But the case came out against him in the end. A lawyer in New York proved that the house had been legally given, and nothing could be done. Since then it is Marcel Moncourt who pays the servants and acts for the owner, but Mr. Caspian is sure the place is not his.

Well, here we are in it, anyhow, and shall be till to-

morrow, for we are seeing the neighbourhood to-day, and to-night motoring to a dance at Piping Rock, where there is a country club very rich and celebrated. Now, is it not mysterious: a house without a name, belonging to a nameless man? Figure to yourself, we eat this man's food, for we are not allowed to pay, and we know not whom to thank! Last night when we arrived we were shown to our rooms by a Japanese butler. Each room has its bath, and not only that, but its own little *salon*. (My suite is French, Molly's and Captain Winston's is English of the Elizabeth time; and there are rooms Spanish, Italian, Egyptian, Chinese, Russian, and Greek.) We bathed and dressed, and went down to dine in a circular dining-room with inlaid marble walls, and doors of carved, open-work bronze that have transparent enamel, like iridescent shell let into the openings. It is the first house I have seen big enough to make the Goodrich family look small, and the girls screamed with admiration in the dining-room; but Peter Storm laughed at the whole house. He said he would like as much to live in the Museum at Athens.

Afterward in the garden Mr. Caspian spoke of that, and said it was "bad taste," because Mr. Storm could never have been to the Museum of Athens, and "a man of his stamp" was no judge. It was only an impertinence of him to pretend, and an accident that he should have climbed up for a while from his position to ours.

That divided me between a laugh and a snap! Because Mr. Caspian is a little man without distinction, and Peter—but already you know from my letters what he is like.

"I thought," said I, "you were socialist, and for you one man was worth another."

"I am not that now," he hurried to tell me. "Since I came into so much responsibility I am broader."

I knew what he meant, because now I learn the nuances of English words. But to spite him I agreed. "Ah, yes, it is in the waist a little, I suppose!" That was the cat in me, for it is true he is growing fat just at his waistcoat. But I remembered in time my promise to Larry and dropped the cat to be the meek mouse, while Mr. C. explained with care that it was his mind which had broadened out.

Perhaps I might have been sorry I had scratched, if he had not gone on with talk against Peter Storm, as he always does if he finds me alone, or else he makes love. He tried to explain two telegrams that Mrs. Shuster had sent wrong: one which was meant for him, addressed to Mr. Storm, and vice versa. It seemed as if Mr. Caspian had wanted her to get Peter back in the middle of the trip, on a pretense of much work; but he tried to make me believe it was not his wish at all. "I am Mrs. Shuster's friend, and she asks my advice," he said. "Honestly I do think Storm is a slacker about work. It looks as if he'd only engaged as her secretary to get into a class above his own and enjoy himself. I'm afraid he'll lose his job if he doesn't 'watch' out, the way Mrs. Shuster feels. But she's good-natured, and perhaps she'll give him another chance if he shows his good will by stopping indoors to-morrow and correcting some proofs that must go to the publishers in a hurry. I happen to know they've arrived, by express delivery. It's a test of Storm's loyalty. If

you're willing to let me drive your car on its sight-seeing tour of the neighbourhood, Storm can make good with Mrs. Shuster."

These were almost the words he spoke, for I listened hard while I thought what to do.

I answered, sweet as honey, "Yes, *please* drive to-morrow. I will tell Mr. Storm he is free to work for Mrs. Shuster all day long."

He was so pleased with me! Then Peter happened to walk by, in another path, and I said, "I will break it now." "Do!" he whispered back; and did not try to come with me, as he often does if I am going near Peter.

It is a joke with Peter and me since the mistake of the telegrams that Mr. Caspian would do some desperate thing to drive the Grayles-Grice, and that made it more easy to play a little trick. I said: "I hear you are asked to correct proofs of a peace tract. Is it hard to do, or could I help when I finish a long letter I write to-morrow? I have seen so many beautiful sights, I shall mix all up in my mind if I see more before I put on paper my thoughts about them. Mr. Caspian can drive well enough the short smooth ways we have mapped out, do you not think? —and he would have his wish."

Peter laughed, and so did I. There was not need to explain for him to understand that the plan was part of our joke.

Oh, it has been the most heavenly day in the garden! I have sat on a purply red velvet cushion, on a marble seat brought from Italy. Behind the seat is a row of cedars, like a guard of black soldiers. These things suit Long Island as well as they suit Italy, though Peter laughs

at them for being here. He laughs in a good-natured yet almost sad way, as if he thought it wrong to make fun of what a dead man did for love of his son. Peter has sat in the garden, too, working hard, and we have not disturbed each other. The Japanese brought us lunch out of doors in a summer house built like a temple in a Roman garden. We had hothouse strawberries and cream of Jersey cows, and when Peter heard me say I would like to see a Jersey, he ordered a Japanese to have one fetched. It came—oh, so small a cow, like a great toy, colour of biscuit, and with a purple tongue which it rolled round a tartine I gave. I have never been more happy.

I would have asked Peter at *déjeuner* if there was a son of Marcel Moncourt, but it seemed not the right time somehow, I can hardly tell why. When I have helped him with the proofs perhaps. (I am to copy his marks on a second set, and I shall try so hard not to have mistakes!) Or to-night, at the Piping Rock Club, where we shall dance together, I hope. Anyway soon. And I will write to you all he says.

Your fairy-tale goose girl—or princess—I know not which!

PATRICE.

## IX

### ANGÉLE DUBOIS, PATRICIA MOORE'S MAID, TO THE MARQUISE DE MONCOURT (*A translation of her letter into English.*)

Madame la Marquise has done me the honour of commanding me to write when there was news, good or bad, of the distinguished Monsieur Laurence Moore.

The first time I took pen in hand I had the pain of telling Madame of his failure in finance, which greeted Mademoiselle his daughter and me on our arrival in this country. Had it not been for my promise to Madame, I do not know if my courage would have supported the humiliations I was obliged to suffer at that time, but I reminded myself of her confidence in me, and praise be to the saints was able to accomplish my duties until better days dawned. In this I was aided by the kindness of Monsieur, who has much sympathy and condescension for all near him. It is unfortunate that he should be forced to put his beautiful house to the uses of a hotel, as I took the liberty of complaining before to Madame. But such is the unique charm of Monsieur, he carries off this apparent ignominy without losing caste, and is most popular with all his guests and domestics—even too popular with some of the former who are females. And this brings me to my excuse for troubling Madame.

Poor Monsieur is as gay and good-natured as a boy.

He can bear to hurt the feelings of no one, not even a cat, human or otherwise. And then, naturally, like all men, he has a weakness for being comfortable. Money should grow in his pockets, but alas! it does not. They are often empty, and he knows not how to put up with that. It is no doubt the duty of his daughter to take a husband rich and generous enough to put Monsieur in the position he should fill, without anxieties, where, if there is any question of a second marriage for him, the choice of a wife may be made by his heart. And if Madame la Marquise will forgive me the immense presumption of speaking my mind, I may say that, from the inquiries Monsieur has made concerning his friends in France, I feel assured his soul is really there.

Most unluckily, however, Mademoiselle—who pretends such devotion to her “Larry”—puts her own fancies before his welfare. I have done all my possible to persuade her that she should accept a certain Monsieur Caspian, who has one of the great fortunes of this country, it appears, and is also most presentable. This I have done not only because it is for the ultimate good of Mademoiselle, and because Monsieur Caspian has been considerate to me, but far more because of my promise to watch in every way the true interests of Monsieur Moore. With such a son-in-law, he would be free to turn his face toward France: and he himself wishes the marriage in his wiser moments. He may even have borrowed some few thousands of francs from Monsieur Caspian. But his good nature is the enemy again—always the enemy! He has fear of being the cruel parent. Indeed he is not, I think, intended by heaven for a parent at all. Yet, rather than push Made-

monselle into a marriage, he is ready to be drawn into one himself, and there is now much danger that this may happen.

As I write, Mademoiselle is away on a short automobile tour, and Monsieur is completely unprotected, except by me, and what can I do but write to Madame la Marquise? Staying in the house is a dangerous woman, not possessed of siren fascinations; indeed, on the contrary, she is of a plainness to chill the blood of a *debonnaire* man like Monsieur Moore. It is her money that is the magnet, and ah, the power makes itself felt! She, the woman who has the *bourgeois* name of Shuster, has remained at home, giving various excuses, but the true reason is to get herself safely engaged to Monsieur before the return of his daughter. Monsieur also, it must be confessed, is a little to blame in this matter, but it is his good nature once more! And, then, he was not perhaps averse to an innocent flirtation with a woman, even an unattractive one, who flattered him. Now, he is being drawn farther than he may have meant when he made the pretext that he was needed at home. I would telegraph to Madame, but I do not see what good that would accomplish. It is not likely that even to save an old friend from disaster, Madame would launch herself at a moment's notice upon a dangerous voyage. Besides, there is this consolation: even if Monsieur is led by the nose—his so handsome nose!—a betrothal is not a marriage, and there is many a cup does not reach the lip which awaits it.

Madame la Marquise may rest assured that I will not leave a stone unturned to prevent the worst from coming about. When Mademoiselle returns I will make her com-

prehend that her dearly loved father's happiness is in her hands. She has but to make a small sacrifice which she will never regret. Even for herself it would be well, were there no other to consider, for there is on the scene a person *extremely undesirable* of whom Mademoiselle is thinking too much. I have been asked to warn her against him, and I do my best, but it is a delicate situation. Mademoiselle can be obstinate as the camel. She would have little regard for my advice had I not come to her from Madame.

With unfailing devotion and respect, I am the humble servant of Madame la Marquise,

ANGÉLE DUBOIS.

## X

### EDWARD CASPIAN TO MRS. SHUSTER

MY DEAR FRIEND:

If I dated this letter "The Stanislaus House," it would suggest nothing to you except a hotel. It's not a hotel; but it has *no name*, and it is generally spoken of in this way. As a matter of fact, it ought to be mine, and I've suffered from a strong sense of irritation in being brought here against my will. I couldn't prevent the party coming, however, and as I didn't care to turn my back while P. S. had everything his own way, I let myself be dragged, as you might say, at his victorious chariot wheels.

We were to have gone to the nearest hotel, as you know, for your telegram to me (just forwarded) and the proofs for Storm were both addressed there. P. S. had this invitation up his sleeve as a surprise for the crowd. His pal Moncourt knows the man to whom the place was left by young Stanislaus, or else he got the favour through the man's lawyer, which I think more likely. But no use troubling you with details of the affair, which can't interest you as it does me. Suffice it to say it's a very fine place, and there's something queer about the ownership which, as it happens, my detectives are at this very time trying to get at the root of. I've never ceased to feel that I have been defrauded. I suspect Storm heard something of the story from Moncourt, and put him up to arranging the

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"surprise" more to annoy me than to please any one else. Well, he scored, I can't deny. But the man laughs best who laughs last, you know, and it's my turn now. I got my chance at Piping Rock, as I expected; and as I shan't arrive at Kidd's Pines with the others, I am writing this to put you on to the situation; also to acknowledge your telegram. It was nice of you to send it like that, the minute you got my scolding letter from Easthampton. I'm sorry I was so severe, though I had some excuse to be cross. I forgive you freely, now things are turning out a little better, and I ask you to do the same with me.

I am writing, as before, in a hurry, for I have to go to New York on important business. My own car has been put to rights, and I am expecting it to turn up at any minute. I shall post this, ~~exhibit s~~, on the way to town.

Well, the little lady played me a trick day before yesterday. Watch out for her, my friend! She looks as innocent as a Christmas card angel, but she's got something of the pussy cat in her composition. Not that I like her the less for that. It's more exciting. The only way is, to know what one may have to expect, and be ready for emergencies. She may try to make trouble for *you* in a certain direction, so hurry up and fix things! But so far as I'm concerned, it seems as if I'd got her in hand since last night.

The trick she played was to send me off, driving her beastly Grayles-Grice, and carting the Goodrich family round the country, while she and Peter Storm spooned in an imitation Italian garden. I hadn't a notion the girl meant to stay behind till I was in the car with the wheel in my hand. The Goodrich lot were in, too. One of them

wanted to know what we were waiting for? I said, "For Miss Moore." "Oh, she isn't coming!" remarked the gigantic young female. "She's got letters to write."

Letters be blighted! It took all my *noblesse oblige* not to step out of the automobile and refuse to stir. But it would have looked rather too marked, and that little devil of a Mrs. Winston would have been too much tickled. Her car was close by at the time, and for once she'd stopped chattering, no doubt to see how I would bear the blow she probably knew was coming. My one satisfaction was to give her *none!* But I hoped for more later, and got it, as you are going to hear.

I had made a plan for the evening, in case Storm showed up for the dance. It was quite a simple one. I hadn't given him a special invitation, as I had the others, and if he took it for granted he was asked, it was his own fault. I knew that one of the most exclusive women in society was coming to the dance, Mrs. Sam de Silverley. You may have known she was on your ship, though it's unlikely you saw her, as she was badly sick all the way across, I've heard. She's been rather friendly with me since I came into my money; in fact, I helped to get her the house she's taken for the summer, not far from the Piping Rock Club. It belongs to a man I know, a great golfer, in France with the American Ambulance just now; and it was on my programme for the day to call and ask her to be nice to my party in the evening. I did call, while the crowd were having a picnic-lunch, ran the Grayles-Grice to her place, and stopped long enough for coffee. She's fond of a little gossip, and knew all about the debacle at Kidd's Pines of course. I gave her a few picturesque details of

P. S. and his exploits on land. Mrs. Sam had already heard of those at sea. The stewardess and her maid had cheered the monotony of the voyage by describing the "Stormy Petrel," as it seems you all called him on shipboard. I let *you* down lightly; said that out of charity you'd employed the man to do secretarial work, to which he was entirely unsuited, but that he was thoroughly at home as chauffeur. I enlarged a little on his impudence, and remarked that I shouldn't be surprised if he had the cheek to turn up at the dance, pretending to be my guest.

"If he does, I have enough influence in the club to see that he is asked to go," Mrs. de Silverley assured me. And that was exactly what I wanted. It would be awkward for me, in the circumstances, to have him put out, I said, but if the club did it, understanding that he was *not* my guest, I should be grateful.

This was the whole of my original plan, and I carried it out as intended. But since beginning to work it up, I found I had Miss Patty to punish as well as P. S. I concentrated my whole mind on my objective while the Goodrich girls admired the scenery, during the afternoon run; and toward evening I thought I saw my way to something *big*.

You haven't seen the Piping Rock Club yet, I think. Well, it's absolutely *it*, and only the right people belong. There's fine golf, and tennis of course, and I've heard Englishmen say the lawns are more like the turf "at home" than any they've seen on this side. In fact, Winston said that very thing to-day: called the club an "American Ranelagh." Not that I set much value on his opinion! The clubhouse itself is just like some jolly old coun-

try house: white shingles and green blinds, green and white awnings, large open court with brick walks running all around, and a fountain playing in the middle, wicker chairs scattered about the court, and window boxes full of pink flowers, wide verandas or loggias, or whatever you call them, where you can have tea or most anything else you want; a lot of rooms with comfortable chintz-covered furniture, jolly chintz like the old patterns at Kidd's Pines, and a ballroom fit for Buckingham Palace. You'll love the place; but I'm not describing it to make you regret stopping at home. If things have gone right with you, it would take twenty Piping Rocks to do that—and *then* one! All I'm aiming at is to show you the swell sort of setting I had for my stage last night.

The big dances are in the fall and winter. This one was a special affair, very smart but not big, and that made every one there more conspicuous. Our crowd had about the only strangers in it. Pretty well all the rest knew each other, and most of them belonged to the same clique. I felt good all over, as if I had a chance of coming into my own, when I found Storm in the chauffeur's seat of the Grayles-Grice, ready to drive us to the dance. He was in evening clothes under his big coat: had worn them to dinner of course, pretty weird ones; ready made, I should say. I guessed that he meant to brave the business out, though I wasn't quite easy in my mind up to the last that he wouldn't make some excuse to go home when he'd got us to the clubhouse. But not a word of the sort did he utter. On the contrary, I heard him tell Miss Moore she "wasn't to forget their dance." That made me hot in the collar, and if I'd been inclined to wobble before, I

nailed my colours to the mast then. Not only was I egged on by my anger against that fellow, who has deliberately put stumbling-blocks in my way from the first, but by my sincere desire for Miss Moore's welfare. Quite apart from my wishes where she is concerned, nothing could be worse for her than an entanglement with an adventurer like Storm—a man from the dark, you might call him, if you chose to say nothing worse. And already the Goodriches are talking—made jokes in the automobile yesterday about the two who had stayed at home to "write."

How girls manage to squeeze such a lot of clothes into small space, I don't know. Anyhow, Miss Patty and the Goodriches and the two young married women didn't appear in the same dresses they had worn for the dance at Easthampton. I never saw Patty look so pretty, though as a rule I don't like green, and to me it's unlucky. I shall never let her have another green dress when we are married, becoming though the colour may be. Storm was looking after the Grayles-Grice when the rest of us went into the clubhouse, so I knew the dance Patty was to "remember" couldn't be the first. I asked her to sit it out with me, and she hesitated a minute. "Has some one else got ahead of me?" I asked. She said no, but she had been thinking she wouldn't give the first dance to any one; she would "sit with Molly and Jack." It shot into my head that she didn't want Storm to come in and find her with me, knowing he wastes no love on yours truly. I was mad, but I kept cool. "All right, let me sit with you all three," I said. "I've got something important to tell you that can't very well wait."

I saw by her eye what she thought the "something important" was, so I hurried to disabuse her mind. "It's about Storm," I explained. "I don't know whether you'd care to save him serious trouble, but you can do so if we talk the thing over while there's time."

"Of course I would care to!" she said. "He's been very kind to Larry and me."

In my opinion it was the other way round, but I didn't stop to argue. I took her into the ballroom, having previously found out that Mrs. Sam de Silverley hadn't arrived yet. I was counting on her being a bit late. She generally is—for the sake of the effect.

When we were sitting down together, Patty and I (all the rest of our lot dancing, except the Winstons), I didn't waste a second in firing off my first gun. "I want to ask you frankly, Miss Moore," I began, "to tell me if you know whether Storm intends to be present at this dance to-night."

"But yes!" she answered in that funny French way she has, that would be difficult to put on paper if one wanted to. "He will come in a few minutes."

"Oh," said I. "That's a pity."

"Why a pity?" she wanted to know.

"Because he's not invited, and that is going to make it mighty awkward—worse than awkward."

"But, you invited us all," she insisted. "You are a member. You have the right—"

"I have the right, but I didn't exercise it for Storm's benefit. I shouldn't have thought of doing so. The rest of the party are gentlemen and ladies. The club

can make no objection to them as guests. Storm is a chauffeur. I should have insulted the club by inviting him, and I certainly didn't do so."

Patty flushed up, and her eyes turned black. She can be a regular little *tiger* cat, that girl! She must have been spoilt by the nuns in that blessed convent of hers! I believe she'd have liked to box my ears. But I knew I had the whip hand, and I was enjoying myself. "He's *not* a chauffeur. You know that!" she snapped. "He kindly drives my car these few days, because we couldn't replace the man who went, and because I am not experienced. If it comes to that, *you're* a chauffeur, too. You drove the Grayles-Grice to-day, and you would to-morrow, if I said yes."

"You are talking sophistry," said I, though I don't suppose she knew what I meant, as I believe she thinks in French. "Storm is a paid employé of Mrs. Shuster. He's been switched off one job on to another to accommodate. And he admits he's had former experience as a chauffeur, driving a Grayles-Grice. Anyhow, the fact remains that's the way his status will be regarded here, and if he comes in, claiming to be my guest, in self-defense I shall have to deny it, otherwise I might be asked to resign. When I've had to give him the lie, he will be kicked out of the place. That's a sure thing."

Patty began to look sick, and her green dress wasn't as becoming as it had been while she was just plain mad. "You said something about my saving him trouble," she reminded me. "What did you mean?"

"Well, you could do one of two things," I began to explain. "You could come out now with me in a hurry

before he gets in, to head him off and tell him in your own words what I've just said."

"I would rather die than do such a very insulting thing!" she rapped out, rolling her r's as if she were beating a drum.

"All right then, there's one thing left—that gives you a little more time, but not much, because if the crash isn't to come the question has got to be decided in a few minutes, before the arrival of a certain lady—as a matter of fact, a lady who was on your ship and knows all about Mr. Peter Storm. When *she* appears on the scene she'll enter a complaint, and the affair will be out of our hands. You will then be too late to save Mrs. Shuster's secretary and your friend the chauffeur from a nasty knock which may leave a black mark for the rest of his life—make it hard for him to get new situations and that sort of thing."

"Tell me quickly what to do and I will do it!" she said.

"Ask me as a favour to you to speak up for Storm. If you do I shall grant the favour, no matter what it may cost me. But as it will most likely cost me my membership when the story comes out later (which it will) why, I sort of feel as if you'd hate to have me give you that favour for nothing."

"I do not ask you to give it for nothing!" said she.

"But you do ask the favour. Is that what I'm to understand?"

"Yes. I do ask that."

"You don't think you'd better wait and hear what I want for my reward before you decide?"

"No. Because whatever you want I will do rather than have Mr. Storm hurt for life, when it was I who

persuaded him to come." (I think she said "me," but that's a detail. I adore her little slips!) "He objected, because there were some good reasons he couldn't tell me for him *not* to go to a big fashionable dance, but I thought that was just because he was modest. I wanted to show him how I felt—how Molly Winston and *all* of us feel, except you, the *Socialist*"—(I wish you could have heard how she bussed that word at me!)—"so I begged him to come, to please *me*. Then he told me he would, and now it seems I bring him to humiliation. It is terrible! Yes, I will do anything to save him. And now what is it you want?"

Poor little tragedy queen, I was almost sorry for her, in spite of her tricks! But I was punishing her for her own future good. Think of the difference for a girl between being Mrs. Edward Caspian and Mrs. Peter Storm!

"Can you guess?" I asked.

"Perhaps I can; perhaps I can't. You had better put it into words, and see how it sounds."

"Well, I only want you to say what your father wants you to say, and what you let me think you might be willing to say, if you weren't so young. I want you 'o be engaged to me. Once you've promised, I shall feel safe, and won't press you too much or too soon for the rest. We can talk the future over with Mr. Moore when we get back to Kidd's Pines."

"*Soit!*!" said Patty, which sounded like slang for a slap, but I happened to remember it was French for something or other. (I asked Mrs. Sam later, and she thought it meant "So be it.") "*Soit!* Now go this instant and make everything perfectly right for Mr. Storm, because here he comes, and if any one is rude, *nothing* I have said counts."

I bounded away from her, as if she'd shot me out of a gun, and crossed the room to meet Storm. It was the first time I had ever been cordial, and he let me see he was surprised. Such was his manner that it was all I could do to keep up the show of friendliness, but I knew Patty was in a mood to come down on me like a thousand of brick if the least detail went wrong. My only fear was that Mrs. Sam might have said something to somebody prematurely; but apparently she hadn't. I explained to Storm I must definitely introduce him as my guest, because all the other names had been mentioned, and not his. You could have knocked me down with a feather when he said, "Oh, I'm not *your* guest. I'm here on the invitation of Mr. James Strickland of New York, and Huntington, Long Island, who is one of the oldest members of this club, as I dare say you know. But he doesn't come to the dances."

For a minute I was weak in the knees. I saw all my work destroyed. But when I'd got my second wind I realized that nothing was changed. Patty would never tell Storm that she'd engaged herself to me to save him from being turned out of the Piping Rock Club. She'd be too proud for such a confession, and, besides, she'd hate to upset his feelings to that extent. When she's not in a temper she's almost absurdly kind, and when she *is* in a temper, it generally seems to be with me. But I shall change that, later. There was still danger, however, from Mrs. Sam. I had warned her to pull Storm off his perch; now I must warn her to leave him on it, or Patty's promise wouldn't stand. I let Storm go, even though I knew he was going straight to *her*. She was engaged to marry me, and I could trust her—as far as I could see her anyhow!

Presently Mrs. Sam floated in with a suite consisting of one husband, one daughter, and several satellites of both sexes. She had on the most expensive dress in the room, I should judge, and her hair was done in a way which nobody could help noticing on account of the diamond sign-posts; consequently she was in a good humour. I paid her compliments, and then pretended suddenly to remember our conversation of the afternoon. "Oh, by the by," said I, "that fellow I was telling you about turns out to be better than I thought. He's not a professional chauffeur, and apparently he's a gentleman by birth. Anyhow, he's a protégé of James Strickland the New York lawyer, and is introduced here by him, not by me. He's got the counter-sign! We'd better consider him a friend and let him pass —what?"

"Oh, certainly, if he's under the protection of Strickland," said Mrs. Sam. "James Strickland is the most successful of the decent lawyers in New York. One never knows when one may want his services, and he's merciless, positively *merciless*, if he gets down on anybody. We'll let sleeping dogs lie."

Whether she meant that Strickland or Storm was a sleeping dog, or that they'd both lain down together, I don't know, and don't care. I'd got what I wanted!

"I wonder why it is Miss Moore's green dress seemed so becoming the first part of the evening," said the oldest and shortest Miss Goodrich to me when we were sitting out an extra (I'd as soon try to dance with the Statue of Liberty as with her), "and now it doesn't suit her at all."

If she'd known it, that remark was less complimentary to me than to Patty herself; but she didn't know, for the

engagement isn't out yet. It won't be till after I arrive at Kidd's Pines with the ring (choosing it is part of my business in New York), and meanwhile I've gone into all these details in my letter to you, so that you'll be "on to" the situation. I've helped you, and if you see any need for a special effort before I get back (or afterward either for that matter) I shall rely on you. Besides, each one of us agreed to report progress to the other. If I hadn't seized upon this happy thought for the dance, I might have had my work cut out to get Patty, once you'd secured the father. I have a vague and not very self-flattering idea that she was keeping me up her sleeve, so to speak, for use in order to "save" her father. Well, she "saved" Storm instead, so her philanthropic instincts haven't been wasted. The question is—though you mayn't think me very gallant to ask it—is there any fear of its working the other way round? I, having permanently promoted the family fortunes, will our friend "Larry" jog on quietly with the bit in his mouth?

You have fair warning, anyhow, and I hope to see you day after to-morrow.

I am a different man from the one who wrote you last time.

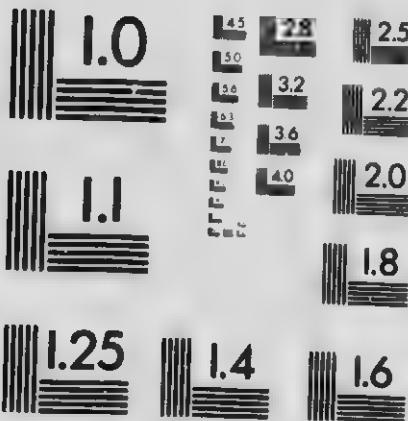
Your sympathetic friend,

E. CASPIAN.



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## XI

### PETER STORM TO JAMES STRICKLAND

*Huntersford.*

*My Simple Life Room. Unearthly Hour; but leading Hen  
has just laid my breakfast Egg.*

**HAIL, FATHER CONFESSOR!**

When you read what I have to say, if you weren't a model of (several, if not) all the virtues, you'd say, "I told you so!" But you're a cynic at head, not at heart, and you allow yourself to be sarcastic only in the privacy of your own brain-pan as a rule.

I warn you I want to gush, and having stripped myself of all alleged friends and acquaintances (except you) as a tree strips itself of leaves in winter, I've no one else to gush to.

Perhaps it's but fair to myself, though, to explain that it doesn't feel like "gush" to me. I use the word only because I'm a coward and fear to have you think me a sentimental idiot. I'm trying to let myself down, you see, as easily as I can!

It's a queer thing (I don't know whether a punishment or an omen of blessing) that our talk when you prophesied my repentance took place on the same road I travelled last night in a car of the same make and same power. The same moon which gazed coldly on you and me, and maybe eavesdropped, beamed sympathetically on me and some one

else a few hours ago, and if it had sense, witnessed your poetic justification.

Now I ask for your advice again, and this time—if it's anything like what I want—I'll take it.

But I find it isn't as easy to get on with my confession as I thought it would be. I'm nervously inclined to put the cart before the horse. Or, I'm hanged if I'm sure which is the cart and which the horse!

The spell of the moon is upon me still. I feel myself two men—the man who argued you down; the man who wishes you had downed him. I wonder if you remember that night—my last on this side of the water—as well as I do? Can you see us two, after our secret visit to *the house*, getting into the car? The moon a boat tossing a silver prow high into the blue, and the stars small bright points like sequins flung in the air at an Eastern wedding. Away we go, slipping through Cold Spring Harbor; trees pouring past the car like smoke, hills olive gray in the moonshine; old white houses dreaming of their stately past; young houses wide awake and playing bridge or victrolas; carpets of baby bracken; dark, slumbering forests planted by forgotten Indians; stretches of fair country with pools of moonlight ringed in shadow shores; then, *your* dear old seafaring town of Huntington, where to-night, by the way, I had a glimpse of your own delightful butter-yellow house as we slipped along the road between your lawn and the water. The weeping willows moving in the breeze looked like silver fountains, and the thick blossoms of the apple orchard might have been a million hovering white moths.

You and I had no such fancies in our heads that night,

had we? We didn't think that each side road we passed looked as if it led to fairyland—more fools we! But I was always a fool. I see that now, when my brain is suddenly seized with growing pains.

Just about at Northport you suggested the possibility of my wanting to marry. I thought of that last night, as a glimpse of moonlit water flashed under my eyes, and remembered how I laughed you to scorn. All through those gay and vital young woods which wall the road beyond I continued to idiotive, unable to see dryads dancing in the moonlight (as *she* and I saw them in the same spot tonight), careless that Nature was distilling magic perfume for us from tree and fern and wild flower, our eyes shut to the fact that elves disguised as Indian lilies were using silvered ponds for mirrors.

Do you remember that lonely graveyard in the woods, relic of some community of early settlers? "I'd as soon be dead and lying there as live the life you want me to live!" said I, with a would-be wise nod of the head as I drove past. But now I see too well that you were the wise one. Why didn't Nature make me understand myself as I begin to understand now? There must have been the same heart-searching perfume in the woods that night—a blend of locust bloom with wild roses and the bittersweet tang of young fox-grape tendrils swinging high among the tree branches. Yet I could do no better than expound to you my dry-as-dust opinions on marriage. Women, according to me, had only one way of making a man happy, and thirty thousand ways of torturing him. I wanted to have inscribed on my tombstone: "What did he do for the good of womankind? He remained a bachelor." Most

husbands and wives, I thought, had the air of being married to foreigners whose mentality they could never quite touch. I believed that I was cut out for a bad husband, a disappointing friend, an irritating acquaintance, and that the ends of the earth were the only happy hunting grounds for a wild spirit like mine—places where I could freely dive far down under the surface of myself and swim at ease. Birds in the hand had no brightness of plumage for me. They were always moulting. I coveted the ones that sang farthest away in the bush. "Why have a mad desire to become an ancestor for people you don't know and may dislike?" I think I remember inquiring of you, as you sagely dilated—at ancient Smithtown—on the notable achievements of a certain Bull Rider Smith for the benefits of his posterity. He was doubtless a smart business man and a good sportsman, to gallop so far and fast on such an animal, when told he could have all the road he could ride round on bull-back in the course of a day. But to me his ambition seemed futile, and the whole of Long Island less important than a flyspeck on the map of the world. Now, I shouldn't mind spending my life here, even in *the* house, though I should prefer an old one; and the Smithtown church with its Cyclopic eye of a clock in a tall Puritanical steeple would exactly suit me to be married in.

As we bowled along the Middle Island Country Road she wanted to know if I had ever driven there before. I had to say "yes" (I couldn't lie to her), and then she asked an embarrassing question or two. But she was almost pathetically easy to put off, so afraid she was of being overcurious. I would have given a good deal to burst out with the whole truth, in that mood of mine, a mood of

exaltation with my soul flaming up like a beacon. But even if I'd seriously thought of speaking, I cou' in't with the back of the car boiling over with handsome giantesses from Colorado—goddesses from the Garden of the Gods. They were pretty good about not interrupting; but now and again they couldn't resist breaking in with "Oh, is it our dear old Peconic River again, that gives the name to River-head?" or, "Did they call it Jamesport after King James the Second of England?" or, "Can those beautiful black trees in front of that *darling* white house be Irish yews?" or, "Don't you think Southold's the most adorable old town we've seen *yet?*" Of course, if my companion on the front seat had catechized me in this way, I should have been charmed to give her all my feeble fund of information concerning Huguenot and English settlers, dates, etc. (fortunately 1648 will do in most instances!), but it was a little disconcerting to hear these extraneous discords just when my heart was beating well in tune with the oldest song in the world.

You now need no explanation of what has happened to me. Besides, you've been expecting it to happen. I knew that, and expected on my part to disappoint you by its *not* happening. But this Girl Magic has been too much for me. I've gone under; and I should be a happy man as the moon sets and the sun rises to-day if only I'd listened to you on that moonlight night before it was too late.

Yet is it too late? That's what I want to thrash out. Have I locked the door between myself and happiness with such a girl as Patricia Moore, and is the key lost? Or can I with your help find the key, oil the lock, and open the door?

I used to think a very young girl went about—so to

speak—with a love letter in her pocket all ready for post except that it wasn't yet addressed. But this girl isn't like that. She wouldn't write the letter till she knew the address she wanted to send it to. All the same I feel the possibility that I could make her care for me.

I suppose I was falling in love with her when I wrote you that I wasn't. I thought it was just very pleasant and amusing to be on terms of friendship with such a charming and unique girl. But now—friendship! There's as much difference between that and love as there is between a photographic copy of a Tintoretto and the original Tintoret itself. When I think of any other man getting Patricia Moore, a link seems to drop right out of my spine. Yet she's not born for an old maid. Love and a "happy ending" for her story ought to be attached to her like a label. If I can't work to get her, some one else will. Caspian is doing it already, but in spite of the money I don't think she'd ever take him: her instinct finds truth as the needle finds the pole. Three boys are also working; but they're big babies, with young-chicken-coloured hair and merry, heather-mixture eyes. They talk no language but slang. They come to grief in a preposterous automobile about every ten miles and attract their idol's attention and startle horses by giving vent to S. O. S. yells. Whenever they have to enter a room they plunge in as if the door had broken away before them. Their only conception of a "good time" is ragtime. If one of them shows signs for a moment of having been trained to house manners, his chums taunt him. "None of your Pêche Melba airs here!" is the favourite expression. So you'll agree with me I have a fair field, if I'm permitted to enter. Am I?

Can I undo everything and go back to the days before the revolution? Would it be fair to others concerned? And that reminds me, whatever happens, young Marcel mustn't suffer. He has been a complication for some time, but apparently he's likely to be a more serious one now. You'd never guess what he's done, if I gave you a dozen chances, so I'll sandwich his love story with mine.

*Her* best friend is named Adrienne de Moncourt, daughter of the widowed Marquise "of that ilk." The said Marquise, from what I gather, is responsible for Miss Moore's being brought up in France, under her own eye. I shrewdly suspect this was arranged in the hope of attracting our "Beloved Vagabond," Larry, back and forth across the sea. A terrible, man-eating tigress of a lady's maid has been imported, nominally to take care of Princess Pat, secretly (or I'll eat my hat) to keep an eye upon and report on Larry's capers to the Marquise de Moncourt! Since my Princess came to these shores, "a distant cousin from America" has introduced himself to the Marquise. He being young, good looking, and presumably rich, the lady invited him to her château to spend Easter. Mademoiselle came home from school for the holidays. The two met. The name of the rich American cousin is Marcel de Moncourt. The Princess Patricia says that she loves her Adrienne next best to Larry, and she hopes and prays the cousin is all he should be. She asked me to tell her if "*our* Marcel" had a son. I was obliged to confess that he had; but when she wanted to know if it could possibly be the same, I hedged in every direction. You and Moncourt and I must have a powwow as soon as possible.

You can't blame me for falling in love, as you always

said the thing was inevitable; and you'll be even less likely to croak if I tell you how it was I first diagnosed the serious state of my feelings.

It was at the dance you got me invited to at the Piping Rock Club—many thanks again. You will deduce that I bought a "reach me down" evening suit before starting on this exhibition—first time I'd worried myself into such togs for heaven knows how long. I never thought to be caught by conventions again, but I'd tar and feather my body if that was the costume best suited to *her* society. You see how I'm turning over new leaves—turning so fast I've hardly time to read them as I go on!

As I explained to you in asking the favour, I guessed that Caspian meant to score over me, so I wanted to be the one to do the scoring. I thought if I simply swaggered into the ballroom as one of Caspian's guests, he was certain to repudiate me, which would have been rather amusing if it hadn't made me conspicuous. It was, as you remarked, something of a risk to appear at all in such a place on such an occasion, but I've trusted to luck so often and come out on the top of the wave (literally!) that I didn't mind, provided I could jog along quietly, and get in even one dance with my little princess. I felt safe under your respectable wing, and was looking forward to the fun of not exploding if Caspian had laid a fuse to blow me up. But Strickland, think of it, *she* had been suffering for my sake!

When I went to ask her for our dance, I found her deadly pale. "What is the matter?" I jerked out, actually scared by her whiteness. "Are you faint? Shall I take you into the open air?"

"Oh, please do!" she said; and I whisked her out quickly onto one of those verandas as wide as a room

"Could we go home?" she asked piteously, but when I suggested making a dash into the ballroom to find her pal, Mrs. Winston, she wouldn't hear of it. "No," she said, "Molly mustn't be disturbed. It is nothing. Only—I should like to go. If you wouldn't mind."

If I wouldn't *mind!* It would have been pretty well worth being born for to drive her back alone, just we two in the car, but I dared not take the child at her word. I thought she was too ill to remember Mrs. Grundy's silly old existence, and I couldn't take advantage of her forgetfulness. At the same time it seemed the act of a prig grafted on to a bounder to put the idea into her head, and make her ashamed of having said the wrong thing. You see what a nuisance my conscience is! I petted it so much when it was young, now it won't stop in its cage. I didn't know what to say, and felt as if it would be money in my pocket not to have been born, for my spirit had melted in me, as one of those soft capsules melts in your mouth.

I don't know what I should have said or done, my mental state being that of a hen in front of a motor, if at that instant Mrs. Winston herself hadn't appeared. It was as if my subconscious self had made a dash and dragged her out by the hair! Winston was with her (as Mrs. Shuster ingenuously remarked one day, "That man is as nice to his wife as if he were somebody else's husband"), and they came straight to us, marching solemnly, like a deputation.

"Angel child," said Molly (we all think of her as "Molly"), "I noticed you looking a little wan, so Jack

and I just waltzed out to see how you were, and also to pat Mr. Storm figuratively on the back."

"Why—what has happened?" inquired the princess almost wildly.

"Such fun! Envy is the sincerest flattery, so Mr. Storm ought to be pleased that Mr. Caspian hasn't loved him since the day he had his great inspiration about Marcel and Kidd's Pines. It appears that our vaudevillain (isn't that a nice name for dear Eddy?) passed round the word that Mr. Storm had no invitation to this dance, when all the time he had come on the behest of some fearfully celebrated man in New York every one seems to bow down to. Collapse of the gunpowder plot!"

"Oh, I'm so thankful!" sighed dear Molly's Angel Child. She clapped her hands and gave a little skip. Then I guessed in a flash why she had looked pale, why she had wanted to get me out of the ballroom, and why she'd been ready to defy old Lady Grundy in order to keep me safe, and avoid hurting the poor secretary-chauffeur's feelings by telling him what was up. That was the moment, my friend, when I realized that I'd always been wrong and you'd always been right. I knew that the girl lit the world for me.

Again I ask you, What am I going to do about it?

I don't believe she's in love with me. It was only that she couldn't bear to have me humiliated, and was willing to make a sacrifice to save me pain. But I do believe I could make her love me if I tried.

The kind angel as good as admitted the cause of her illness by making a quick recovery and going in with Captain Winston while I followed with his wife. Molly, by the

way, almost confessed she'd suspected that Pat was anxious for my welfare, and had come out to relieve the girl's mind. Do you wonder at the state of mine? I'm bound to add that my rescue didn't seem to restore her spirits permanently. She looked rather "wan," as Molly said, all the rest of the evening; or it may have been the effect of a green dress she wore. Certainly she was somewhat *piano* in manner, too; and despite her pal's slap at Caspian, the princess didn't treat him as if he were the dragon of the opera. On the contrary, she sat out several dances with him. I bear her no grudge, though! She hadn't the air of enjoying his society.

We were to have started for Kidd's Pines the morning after the dance at Piping Rock, but a Mrs. Sam de Silverley (who said she knew you) was moved by curiosity to want me introduced to her. She "pined to see the inside of the Stanislaws house," first hinted and then pleaded to do so, and in return invited the whole of our crowd to a garden party at her place. Some Russian dancers were to "entertain," and the Goodriches—who are seeing life with all their souls—yearned to go. So did our bride and bridegroom, who want their money's worth of honeymoon; therefore it was arranged that we stay over, and drive home in a moonlight procession.

I am not built for bun worries, be they out of doors or in, and declined on the plea of important work. Besides, I saw by the look in Patsey's eyes that she also intended to refuse. I hoped that through some remarkable coincidence we might meet in the garden "at home," as we had the day before, but Caspian caught the coincidence this time, so I sulked in the house with man's most faithful

dumb companion, a pipe. Caspian didn't stay with my little 'ly for long, so I hope she refused him and got it over with. Anyhow, she was in a delicious mood all the way to Kidd's Pines, as you may have assumed from the tone and indeed the very existence of this letter. We talked of impersonal things, never of ourselves and seldom of each other, and she was not as g... as when we began the trip, yet—never had she been so dear.

I began this letter with a partial promise to abide by your advice; but if you harshly tell me it's too late to change things, I'm afraid I shall go full speed ahead just the same. I won't, however, decide till I hear from you—not 'cause I'm patient, but because the girl mustn't be "bed" in any case. Besides, I shall very likely not see her to-day. I dropped the party at the door of Kidd's Pines in the dead middle of the night (forgot to tell you Caspian didn't c...e with us, but turned tail and went to New York: *another sign!*), garaged the Grayles-Grice, and biked to the village. I'll now try to sleep for an hour or two—less because I'm tired than because I want to dream myself back in the path of the moon, where walks Romance to greet me. My bed here, by the by, usually reminds me of a rack out of commission. But to-day I don't care. I shall find it a bed of roses.

Write as soon as you've thought things over, please. Or, better still, wire: "Advise yes," or—but I won't think of the alternative.

Either way, however, I'll still be yours loyally,

FETRO.

P.S. Can't sleep, can't dream. Something tells me all

isn't well at Kidd's Pines. I had forebodings before we started that there'd be ructions when we got back, but I'd mislaid them under a thousand other thoughts. Seems a long time ago! But while I was trying to sleep just now, this came into my mind as if a voice spoke it: "Bridge the gulf that parts you from your wish, and you can walk across." I wish it were *your* voice said that, old man!

P.P.S. Talk of women with their postscripts! They're not in it with me. I keep leaping off the gridiron—I mean out of bed—again and again to add a word that threatens to burst my brain if bottled up. This time shall be the last! I only want to assure you that I'm not brooding over any *coup* of revenge against Caspian. My personal dislike of him has nothing to do with my attitude, except that the more I see of the worm the more I see what a worm he is. Not only is he unworthy to crawl in the same atmosphere with Miss Moore (don't smile sarcastically at that expression. I *like* it!) but he's more fitted for underground conditions than any caterpillar I ever met. Caterpillars change to butterflies. Worms, as far as my knowledge goes, are changeless. I don't feel revengeful against him. But I don't feel conscientious and dutiful for a cent!

## XII

### PATRICIA MOORE TO ADRIENNE DE MONCOURT

CHÉRIE:

I have not the heart or the time for a long letter, but I must quickly tell you that our Marcel *has* a son. I asked P. S. But he seems not to think your new cousin can be the same. Soon, surely, he will himself say everything to you, and open his heart wide. Ah, how I wish you all there is of happiness, the more because I am not to have it myself.

The critics knew better about life than I, you see, Mignonne. Yet I am going to be brave. I have got myself engaged with Mr. Caspian already, since I wrote from the beautiful house. You will think that strange, but it came to happen in a simple way. It was at the dance at the Piping Rock Club. That sounds romantic, is it not? But it was not romantic at all. I just had to do it. Then, after a little while, I was very sorry. I thought perhaps I need not have made myself this misery. I was not nice to him the rest of that night, and the next day I would not let him take a snapshot of me in the wonderful garden. I said I had a copyright of my own face, if we *were* engaged! And I hoped that would make him break, but it did not. He was only in the sulks. And he does not look nice in the sulks. I was glad he had to go to New York and not motor home with us in the Grayles-Grice, and I could not

be interested when he said in hints that his business in town had something to do with *me*—something I should like! I'm sure I cannot like it. And oh, chérie, he has such *slept on* looking ears, I dare not think of them: too flat, and crinkly at the top like inside lettuce leaves!

I was making up my mind all the way home in heavenly moonlight that it had been a mistake and I must jump out of it. This made me almost happy again—this, and watching Peter Storm drive, which I do like to see, he does it so well, so strongly, it seems to give you strength being near him.

But now I am at home and everything is changed, worse than when Larry was bankrupted. I found him almost engaged to *Mrs. Shuster*. He was doing it because of being poor, and to save me from the sacrifice. That was what he explained. So of course I told him I had promised to marry Mr. Caspian, and all would be right for us. He is going to get out of it with Mrs. Shuster if he can in honour. If he cannot I must try to *dig* him out. Larry matters so *much* more than I do! I wish I were being engaged in France instead of here, because there I think *les jeunes filles* do not have to kiss. Here, one says they do. But *I will not!*

I wish again thy happiness, dear one. Mine is lost. Would it do good if you prayed to Saint Anthony of Padua to find it for me again?

Nobody knows yet except Larry. I shall not tell Angèle. She would be pleased, and I should want to slap her!

Your poor

PATRICE.

## XIII

### MOLLY WINSTON TO MERCÉDES LANE

*Awepesha, Long Island,*

*Wednesday.*

DEAREST OLD GIRL:

I shouldn't call you that if you weren't young and beautiful!

Jack and I have just sent you a cheap, enthusiastic cable containing the one word "Hurrah!" You will understand that our cheers ring across the Atlantic because Monty is mending well. Your letter came this morning with the good news. Biarritz will be a jolly place for his convalescence. I shall never forget when Jack and I were there together before we were engaged. Oh, with *Aunt Mary Kedison, of course!* And in Jack's car, my poor old Horror of accursed memory being burnt long before. Jack was "Brown" then, and my "Lightning Conductor" as he still is and ever shall be; though just at present when we motor I have to sit behind the scenes and make the lightning work. His wounds have left him stiff in the left arm and leg, but the doctors say he will really and truly be himself again in a few months: six or seven at most. I wish you the same luck with Monty, or better if possible.

By the way, we shall meet Aunt Mary again soon. She has been to the Bahamas for the winter, with a family of

retired missionaries (I think they retired after one of them was eaten), but has come back to a house she owns in New England. We shall have to stop and say, "How do you do and good-bye" on our way somewhere else. I confess I dread it, for though Aunt Mary is as good as gold, or, anyhow, silver, she's one of those creatures who begin: "You know I'm a very *truthful* woman," whenever they have a disagreeable personal remark to make. You've met the type! They're mostly women; and they dissolve in tears and think you cruel as dozens of graves if you retort in kind. I expect Aunt Mary's (almost) first words to Jack will be, "Well, Mr. Winston—(oh, *Captain* is it, Molly?)—I'm glad to see that my niece and you continue to get along fairly. You're aware I never *could* approve on principle of these international matches, or mismatches; American women ought to marry men of their own country, if they must marry at all." (She's never forgiven me for snubbing her pet, Jimmy Payne, now a terribly respectable husband and *Poopa*.) "Still, there *can* be exceptions, and evidently you don't bully my niece, as it's established that *most* Englishmen do their wives, for she's looking well considering her age. Let me see, she was born in the year—" But at this point I shall interrupt Aunt Mary by a bright remark about the weather, or a *bludgeon* if the weather won't work!

I thank our lucky stars (Jack and I have a skyful) that we're going to do another trip before we start for New England. Of course I want my ewe-lion (I've named him that behind his back since he turned warrior) to see all of my dear country he can before we have to sail again; but it's too bad such a lovely part as New England should

be infested by aunts, isn't it? It's called the "Ideal Tour," I believe—through the White Mountains and some green and blue ones, etc.—but for Jack and me it will have a drawback. People used to be torn to death by wild horses. That's not done in the best circles now; but it's perfectly admissible, alas, to be talked to death by wild aunts.

I'm charmed that you're so interested in Patsey Moore and Peter Storm. The latter, as I wrote, has developed into *her* "Lightning Conductor." Indeed, in some ways Jack and he are alike: for you know Jack "Brown-ed" himself in order to conduct me; and I can't help thinking that our Stormy Petrel isn't as Stormy as he's painted. Now I know him so well, I don't let my mind dwell on the possibility of his being less worthy of our intense interest than he seems. If there's anything hidden, it's "buried treasure," such as we hope against hope may exist at Kidd's Pines.

It's not very long, as the crow flies—I mean the post—since I wrote you last; but I do think more things can happen in America to the square minute than anywhere else in the world. Especially at Kid's Pines! It's like living in a "movie" when they are running the reels off fast. Why, our reels go so quickly you hardly know what's happened to the "walking men and women," and it's even difficult to tell the hero from the villain.

That sounds frivolous, but it's serious really. I should be very sad if I weren't hoping that Jack and Peter Storm and I may be able to combine together and stop things from going all to bits.

At present *everything* to do with "heart interest" is

*horrid*—except some things that are funny. And the people they're happening to can't see the fun in them as the outsiders—Jack and I—can. Naturally there *would* be heaps of heart interest, all over the place, wherever Patty was; and that would be all right if Larry weren't simply followed around by it too, the way actor-managers are by the spotlight. When we were doing our delicious motor run aro'nd Long Island, getting acquainted with the old whalers, and Indian chieftains, and golfers and millionairesses, it was sweet to see how Pat was unconsciously taming our Stormy Petrel to eat out of her hand. Even Jack saw it happening, so it must have been pretty obvious, because men never *can* see other people's love stories going on under their noses. I knew as well as if he'd told me, that Peter Storm would rather be torpedoed again than fall in love and settle down. Besides though none but the brave deserve the fair, few but the rich ever get them. And I suppose the Stormy One *can't* be rich, whatever else he may be. Perhaps he was *once*, and lost all his money; for he certainly has the look of a banished prince, and the long-distance manner of one, if he doesn't like anybody or is bored. But strong as he may be in many ways, he could not resist Pat when he was in a motor car with her day after day. Jack and I would have bet (if that hadn't been callous) as to whether he'd cave in far enough to propose; and if I had bet I should have lost. But it wouldn't have been my fault. It would have been Ed Caspian's. Jimmy Payne at his worst wasn't a patch on him.

How the man managed it I can't conceive (as Pat is of an almost exaggerated and clamlike loyalty), but she

arrived at Kidd's Pines at the end of that short trip *engaged to Caspian!*

I didn't know till the next day; didn't know that, or the rest. You see, we finished up with a moonlight run from the gorgeous house I wrote you a postcard about. We were late, for the Faust-cry in our hearts was communicated to our speed: "Linger awhile: thou art so fair!" Jack and I didn't stop at Kidd's Pines at all, though they asked us in to have night-blooming sandwiches and such things. We went straight on to Awepesha and slept the sleep of the moderately just. Pat had promised to 'phone in the morning, and did. She merely asked how we were, and said she was well; but I could tell from her voice that something dreadful was the matter. I dashed over in the car before Jack was dressed, ready with an excuse about a book I wished to borrow, and was so early that I found myself colliding—nay, telescoping—with the breakfast brigade of the "hotel."

Pat doesn't break her fast with the paying guest, however: she's an early bird, though er pet aversion is a worm. I sent a message to her room (the smallest in the house) and was invited to go up. There was a cloud of cigar smoke in the air, and as Pat doesn't smoke, I deduced a miraculously matinal call from Larry. That alone was an omen of catastrophe, for Larry is either up all night or not before 10 A. M. And Pat's face was worse than an omen. I could see behind her poor little smile of greeting, right into her mind, as if her head had been a watch with nothing but glass over the works.

"Good gracious, darling, whatever is it?" I gasped.

"Nothing," said she, "except—except that Tom has toothache, and I'm sorry for him."

"That boy has got a regular rush of teeth to 'the head!'" I snapped. "Never mind him. It's you I'm interested in. Dear baby, your nosebud is quite pink. You've been crying—not for Tom's tooth."

"Maybe I got sunburned motoring," she paltered with me.

"Nonsense! You've a sunproof complexion, as well as waterproof hair. *Out* with it, darling!"

"You talk like a dentist," Pat put off the evil moment. "I hope your dentist doesn't call you 'darling.' Mine wouldn't twice. Seriously, my child, I don't want to intrude; but we're friends, aren't we? and I'm older than you (worse luck!), so you might let me help. Is it anything to do with housekeeping worries? Has the cook fainted on the breakfast bacon—or—"

With that—perhaps the picture was too awful!—she burst into tears. "Oh, Larry has promised Mrs. Shuster he'd marry her, and I must save him," she sobbed.

My dear Mercédès, you could have knocked me down with a dandelion seed! Positively my feet felt wobbly under me, like standing on poached eggs. Instantly I realized why the Dove of Peace hadn't wanted to go motoring with us happy, innocent mortals, and why Larry—hypnotized by Mrs. Shuster's money or his own fatal good nature—had pretended that he must stop at home to look after his guests. I wished I were as common as mud, and could have gasped out "Gosh!"

I've told you a good deal about Mrs. Shuster, haven't I? She's not a bad sort in her way—but for Larry, un-

*thinkable!* Yet I might have guessed. She's been doing her hair a new way lately, and powdering her face. For Larry to have to kiss it now would be exactly like kissing a marshmallow. She's so awkward, too; the least obstacle attracts her like a magnet to stumble over it, and Larry hates awkwardness. Then her clothes! She could force a fashion to change, simply by following it far enough; and she's taken to wearing such bright colours it would be more comfortable to look at her through smoked glasses. Oh, yes, I ought to have guessed!

"Save him?" I echoed. "We'll all save him."

"He says it's too late to back out, now, in honour," wailed Pat. "The Moores have always been ter-r-ibly honourable."

I thought from what I'd heard of some, not excepting Larry himself, that "terribly" was the word. I bit my heart and was silent, however, and Patsey went on: "I've done my very best. I've told him it wasn't *necessary*. I feel sure (though of course he's too chivalrous to say so of poor Mrs. Shuster) that he would *never* marry her except for my good. Oh, dear, how I wish money were *extinct*!"

"It is almost, in lots of pockets and other places," I said. "You mean, you think Mr. Moore—er—chose this way of giving you a *dot*?"

"What else could it be? And the cruel part is, I have already the *dot*. I have dotted myself. I am engaged to Mr. Caspian."

"The *devil* you are!" I coarsely exclaimed. But it seemed to comfort Pat somehow. She gave herself to my arms, and cried into my neck the hottest tears I ever felt.

They might have boiled out of a Yellowstone geyser, as a sample.

I soothed the child as well as I could. "Don't cry, dear," I begged. "You didn't on the dock, you know, when you got the bad news."

"Oh, but we were only ruined then!" he choked. "Now we're both of us nearly married. And if Larry'd only known about me in time, he needn't have spoiled himself."

I was tempted to assure her that Larry would hardly have taken such a step for any one's sake except his own. But I knew she'd never quite forgive me for mentioning clay in connection with her idol's feet. Instead, I repeated that Larry *should* be rescued; that I'd talk it over with Jack, and surely, surely we'd think of a plan. Within my heart I vowed, and with far more earnestness, to rescue Larry's daughter also. The very fact that Pa. didn't confess to sacrificing herself, however, warned me from indiscretion. I repeated that I would consult Jack; and a little snake of an idea wriggled into my head at the same instant. I let it curl up and get warm. It was not a viper!

Jack said even worse than I had said. He said "Damn!" But when he says it, my dear, it sounds the most satisfactory word! I *was* pleased he took it that way, instead of reminding me it wasn't our business! I felt encouraged to mention my idea, which was to send a note with our car, and ask Mr. Storm to lunch at Awepesha. "Three heads are better than two," said I, "though it mayn't be so with hearts."

"But Storm's still supposed to be Mrs. Shuster's secre-

tary," said Jack. "If they had any differences after the affair of the telegrams, they've swallowed the hatchet—I mean, buried it. You remember, Storm stayed at home a whole day doing proofs, in the middle of the trip——"

"Yes, the day Pat also stayed at home—the same home—to write letters!"

"Well, what I was coming to is this: while he remains in Mrs. Shuster's service, whatever his motive for doing so may be, he's more or less at her beck and call. It suited her to have Storm's back, and all our backs, turned for a bit; now the ground is safe again under the lady's feet. She'll want our congratulations, and Storm's style, to send out the glad tidings. Ten to one by this time she's got hold of him, and he's heard the worst——"

"Meaning, not about her and Larry, but Pat and Caspian," I finished Jack's sentence.

"Storm will be at Kidd's Pines for lunch," went on my fellow-conspirator (I took it for granted he would be that!), "eating Dead Sea Apples."

"I don't believe it!" I contradicted. "Pat would hardly be equal to meeting him, with that nosebud and those eyes. He'll have escaped into the wilderness—his own backyard, probably. It's the safest and most retired place there is to have a Berserker rage in. I'll word my note so that he'll understand we're on the salvage dodge. Then he'll come like an arrow shot from the bow."

"Car permitting!" said Jack; but he was really sympathetic of course, or he wouldn't have been Jack.

Peter did come, and it was more complicated than I had thought ~~in~~ <sup>coming</sup> up to the subject, because as I've told you, P. is as reserved as a Leyden drop—if that's

the name for it: don't you know, it falls into a jar full of something or other and instantly hardens on the outside, which sets up a great strain, and you have to be careful in touching it for fear it flies to bits? However, I began with Larry and Mrs. Shuster. He hadn't heard about them, for he had been advised in a note from his employeress that he needn't come over till she sent for him (I suppose that was to please Caspian and keep the hated rival out of the way till the creature could rush back). Peter didn't laugh at all, except just at first when I got off my *mot* about the marshmallow kiss. He seemed to think, not about the funny part of such an entanglement for Larry, but about the horrid part of it for Pat. And then, when I had got him quite melted and human, I blurted out: "The worst of it is, poor little Patsey has sacrificed herself to save her father, because *she* . . . ought he'd sacrificed himself to save her, or something of that sort."

"What do you mean?" asked Peter, not able to wait till I had finished swallowing heavily.

"She's promised to marry a man she doesn't even like," I said. "Mr. Caspian."

You ought to have seen his face! His lips tightened, and his eyes simply blazed. I almost thought in another second my Leyden drop would fly to bits! But Peter isn't really that sort of badly regulated drop.

"Caspian's cursed money," he remarked, when he felt able to speak.

"Yes," I replied. "The poor girl said that she wished money were extinct. I wish his were, anyhow!"

"Stranger things have happened," returned Peter.

"I promised Pat that we'd save Larry, and I promised

myself that we'd save her," I went on. "Jack and I have an exalted idea of your cleverness about conducting cars and affairs in general, so we decided to ask you to help us conspire. It was really you who made the success of the venture at Kidd's Pines, by your marvellous conjuring trick of getting Marcel Moncourt to come. We felt, if you could do a thing like that you could do anything. But my gracious, you look as if you'd resort to murder! We don't want you to go as far as that."

"I would if necessary," Peter said, "but I think it won't be necessary. We'll scotch our snake, not kill him."

"The snake doesn't love you," I ventured. "I've sometimes thought he'd do all he could to hurt you. But—but I suppose he couldn't do anything very troublesome, could he, even if you envenomed him a little more?"

"He might be able to upset some of my arrangements," said Peter, "but in upsetting them, his own would be under the avalanche."

I saw by his look that this wasn't just a joke. The Stormy Petrel meant *something in particular*, something he didn't intend to explain to Jack or me; and all my old feeling about his mysteriousness came back. "I should feel guilty," I said, "if by asking you to plot with us, I'd induced you to mix yourself up in a business which might be annoying."

"However it turns out, it won't be annoying," Peter answered. "Things have gone far beyond that. If I choose, Mrs. Winston, I can put Caspian out of the running to-morrow. Money has given him power to use this situation for his own advantage. If he lost it——"

"Heavens, man, if he lost it, don't you see that Patricia Moore's the sort of girl to feel she owed him allegiance?" broke in Jack, who had so far confined himself to listening. "Any one who could take Caspian's money away would be giving him the girl."

As I heard this, I realized how *very* clever Jack is, for neither Peter Storm nor I had thought of that, though it was absolutely true. He and I would have rushed wildly ahead and broken every bank Caspian had a cent in, if we could. But we both had the wisdom to realize instantly that Jack was right about Pat.

"We mustn't do anything serious to begin with," I said. "Let's see if we can't think of something *silly*, like the mouse gnawing the net that had caught the lion. Another lion trying to do that would only have tangled up his teeth. Can you condescend to think of a thoroughly silly and frivolous trick?"

"I've thought of one," said Peter, "without condescending at all. As you say, we won't begin by tearing the net; we'll unravel it. What do you think would have happened to you, Mrs. Winston, before you were married, if you'd had to travel day after day in a motor car with a man you already disliked?"

"I *know* what would have happened. It did happen!" Jack and I tossed each other a smile across the memory of Jimmy Payne. "I got to *loathe* him. I see what's in your head—don't I?"

"You do. But one of us conspirators would have to be in the car to see how things worked, and when they'd gone far enough."

"Of course!" I caught him up. "And that one would

have to be you. I must stick to my poor wounded man on our next trip, as on the last."

"Very well, let it be me," said Peter.

I don't think he wanted his eyes to meet mine at that moment, for he hadn't time to push his soul back behind the glass doors and lock it in. Somehow he couldn't help it, though; and I knew that he knew that *I* knew what was in his heart for Patricia Moore. Whatever the wild streak in his nature was, which had made him vow not to marry and settle down, the flame of love had burst out with such terrific force the streak was simply *melted*.

Truly, I hadn't begun this scene with the deliberate intention of being a matchmaker. But I saw that if the man hadn't loved to *desperation*, he would never have given in at all. Perhaps if this unpleasant tangle hadn't arrived he might have taken himself out of Patsey Moore's life without quite knowing what his had missed—until it was too late.

We went on developing our plan, with occasional suggestions from Jack; and we thought we might as well try to kill another bird with the same stone, by throwing it in the direction of Larry and Mrs. S.

Think what it will be for Larry to be engaged to Mrs. Shuster day after day in a motor car, especially if there's a better looking and younger woman on board!

You see how things are shaping themselves. I *hope* it makes you look forward a little, little bit, to my next letter, dear girl!

Your affectionate, anxious, but optimistic

MOLLY.

## XIV

### PETER STORM TO JAMES STRICKLAND

*The Day before the Battle.*

MANY thanks for your letter, my dear fellow. It's less pessimistic than I expected, and gives me the impression that I may regard you as a Prop. I shall follow your advice rigidly, though I must juggle some of the details, as Caspian has taken advantage of the poor little girl's love for her father, and practically (from what I understand) blackmailed her into promising to marry him. Mrs. Winston is in her confidence, though both she and I think there are unexplored depths. Patricia confesses that, rather than Larry should give her Mrs. Shuster for a step-mamma, she took the line of least resistance to obtain money. But I have a horrible instinctive idea that the trouble began at Piping Rock, and that she really sacrificed herself to shield me. This makes me feel positively hydrophobic toward Caspian; but all the same I'll remember what you say, and not be "precipitate"—one of your favourite words: follows you about like a dog!

Before doing anything drastic, I'm hoping that my dear girl may see for herself that Caspian is impossible. Or, if her devotion to Larry is like the Rock of Gibraltar on which waves of contrary emotions dash themselves in vain, it may be that Larry will do a little mining and sapping on

his own account. Captain and Mrs. Winston and I have formed an alliance offensive and defensive, particularly the former, against the coalesced forces of Caspian and Shuster. There has been no talk of my private feelings —*bien entendu*—but the small nations are to be protected by our united diplomacy. We're starting off on another expedition planned with a certain bold audacity. Moore and his fat fiancée are to travel together in Caspian's Wilmot, conducted by his chauffeur, accompanied by the prettiest, most coquettish Miss Goodrich, and one of Mrs. Shuster's Peace League Confrères, ex-Senator Collinge, a violently intelligent man who looks (Mrs. Winston says) like a moth-eaten lion with false teeth.

We hope and expect that Mrs. Shuster will get on Larry's sensitive nerves when at such close quarters; that desperation combined with natural inclination will drive him to flirt with Idonia Goodrich, who will enthusiastically respond; that Mrs. Shuster's mortification may drive *her* to such vulgar vengeance as will disgust Larry beyond repair; that the lion may not be too moth-eaten to seize his chance and the lady, and that Pat may then scramble down from the pyre of self-sacrifice.

This seems a good deal to expect from a three or four days' motoring trip, doesn't it? But almost anything can happen in automobiles. And I haven't told you yet the rest of our programme.

"Tom, Dick, and Harry" don't count. They're simply "on in the scene," and like the poor, always with us! They pound through the landscape as before, with their Hippopotamus; and Captain and Mrs. Winston, who are to be of the party, will take our bride and bridegroom again,

a very appropriate arrangement. But everything hangs upon the Grayles-Grice. After a council of war with the Winstons, I advised Miss Moore that it would be comparatively safe to have Caspian conduct. You see, the two engagements are announced (Caspian and Mrs. Shuster saw to that, without letting a blade of grass grow under their feet!), and so it was easy for me to take it for granted that Patricia would wish to give the wheel of her car to C. "Of course you'll want to sit in front," I said humbly. "But if you would still care to have any help I can give, I'd gladly offer my services. I can perch on one of the fold-up chairs," I went on, "which will leave plenty of room for any others you like to take, no matter how large (I thought of the Goodriches). I've had more experience as a mechanic than Mr. Caspian, perhaps, and I might be useful in emergencies——"

"Oh you *would!*!" broke in the darling, with adorable alacrity. And as far as she was concerned, the matter was settled. You would have thought, however, that Caspian would be the rock I'd split on, now that he has a "say" in the affairs of Patricia. But the Winstons and I hadn't forgotten this chance in our calculations. We expected C. to take a fiendish joy in the prospect of kicking me when I was down: "putting me into my place" and making love to Miss Moore before my starting eyes—a great triumph for him after the very different Long Island trip in the same car with some of the same passengers. Well, we were as right as rain. The yellow dog snapped at the attractive morsel, which we *hope* we have poisoned. How will *she* stand the situation he is exulting in?

DISCOVERS AMERICA

18.

Next time I write I shall know how our strategy works out. I talk of it lightly, but honestly, Strickland, I'm not laughing on the right side of my mouth. And if it weren't for your advice, and Molly Winston's conviction that Pat would stick to C. if he were ruined, I shouldn't be playing about with any such piffling policy as I've just outlined. There'd be a cataclysm for somebody! I might get involved in it myself—but I'd risk that. It may have to come, anyhow, of course, so hold yourself prepared, as I do. And meanwhile we mustn't forget where the two *Marcel*s come in.

Yours ever,

THE STORMY PETREL.

(That's what they named me on shipboard, and, by Jingo, it's appropriate now!)

## XV

### MOLLY WINSTON TO MERCÉDES LANE

*Just Back at Awepesha.*

DEAREST MERCÉDES:

Jack says he would be having *the* time of his life lightning conducting over here (I'm not sure he expressed it as Americanly as that) if only people would be sensible enough to do what we want them to do. They do seem so obstinate when they won't! Even dear Patsey, not to speak of Larry and the Two Unspeakables—but no, I won't let myself go on that subject now: I might say too much. I'll cool my feelings by telling you about the lovely—or ought-to-have-been-lovely—trip we have just had. Scenery is far more restful than human nature—other people's human nature I mean, not Jack's and mine. And Jack says that American country scenery is the *most* restful in the world, just as the cities are the most exciting. Clever adjustment of the Law of Contrast! I'm not sure he isn't right, are you? Surely there aren't such exquisite, laughing, dryad-haunted woods in Europe, so young and gay and unspoiled looking, as if you had just discovered them yourself, and nobody else had ever seen them before. I'm falling in love with my own country all over again, and appreciating it proudly because my much-travelled Jack is so ingenuously astonished every minute at its striking individuality, its difference

from any other part of the globe he has ever "infested" (his own word!).

Oh yes, every prospect pleases, and only Ed Caspian is vile—though Mrs. Shuster is a good second, and Pat—but I said I wouldn't mention them, anyhow at first. I'm sure Jack and I were *never* so irritating, except perhaps to Aunt Mary. But she was *different*. One somehow wanted to irritate her. She was born to be irritated.

Dearest, I'm going to write you a straightforward account of three divine days which would have been all spotless brightness if it hadn't been for—but no matter!

We (quite a large party in four cars: the Grayles-Grice, the Wilmot, ours, and the Hippopotamus) started early on a warm morning, not from Long Island but from a New York hotel. We'd been invited by Mrs. Shuster to a roof-garden dinner in (or on) it the night before, where we'd been dazzled by an incredible assemblage of gunpowder pearls and dynamite diamonds on the bosoms of the Ammunition Aristocracy—a wondrous new class of Americans sprung up since the war. Not *one* of us wore a jewel, I must tell you, except Mrs. Shuster, who flaunted an ancestral ring she'd cozened out of poor Larry. (Pat had "forgotten" her searchlight which Caspian made a special expedition to New York to buy her as a badge of slavery.)

Jack was quite excited about beginning the Hudson River trip in this way, because he's been so busy discovering Long Island, and it's been so warm, that he kept New York up his sleeve (sleeves are worn large) until later. He hadn't even seen Riverside Drive I'd boasted of so much; but he wouldn't be Jack Winston if he didn't

know rather more about it than the average American, including me.

If it were any other Englishman, I couldn't stand his airs of historic erudition about my native land, but Jack is so human and boyish in his joy of "fagging up things," and so broad-mindedly pleased that we beat his wrong-headed ancestors in our Revolution, that I don't grudge him the crumbs he's gathered. Of course, I pretend to have crumbs in my cupboard, too, even when it's really bare as bone. I say, "Oh, yes, now I *remember!*" and intelligent-sounding things like that.

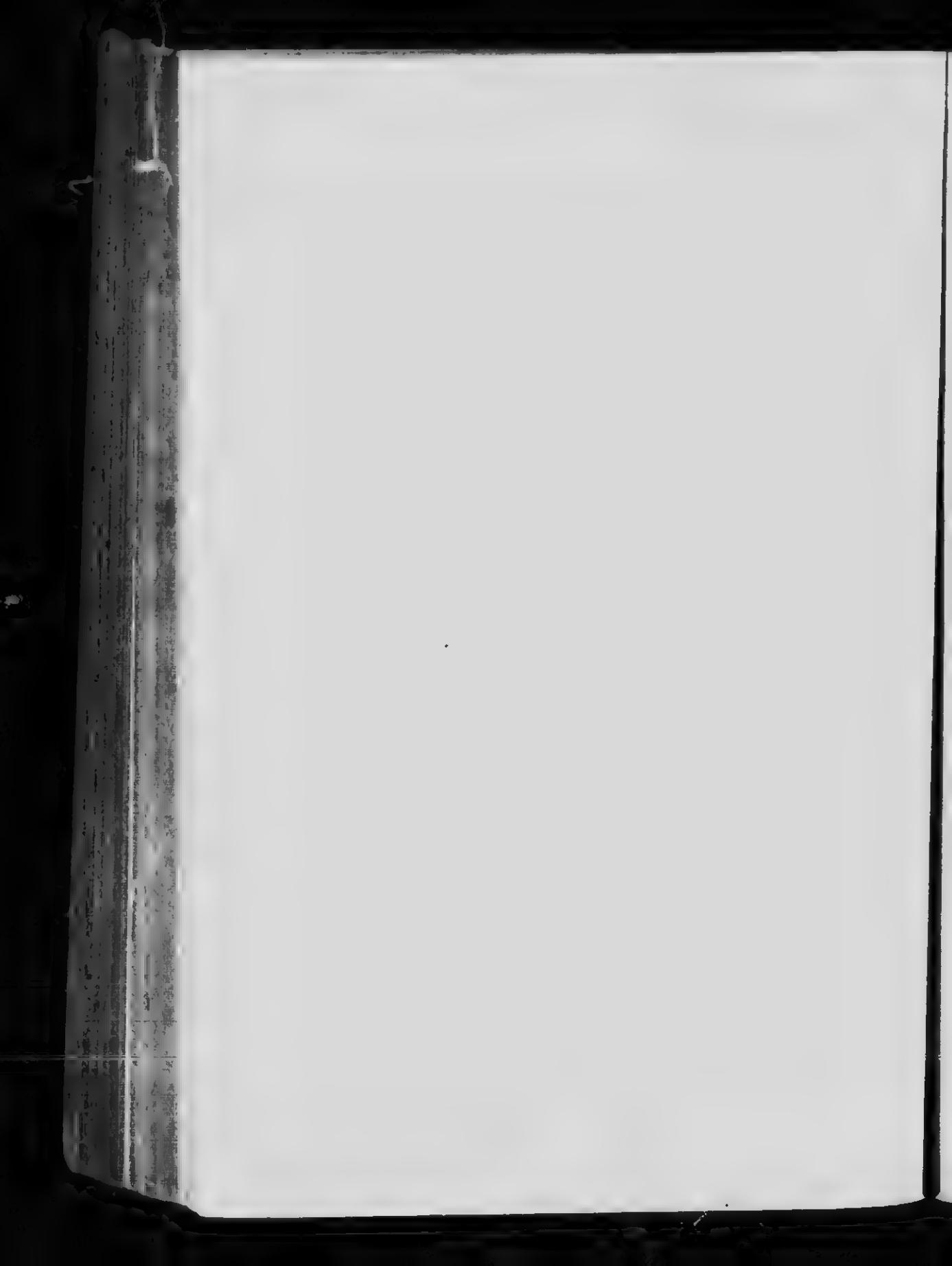
Did you, for instance, ever know that the source of the Hudson—the most important source—is a little lake in Essex County, with an Indian name which translates into "Tear of the Clouds?" I didn't, and I'm not certain people ought to probe rivers' pasts any more than they ought women's. It's their own fault if they find out insignificant beginnings. Fancy saying, "Who *was* she?" about a beautiful body of water like the Hudson! Jack is naturally glad that Henry Hudson was English, not Dutch, as so many people think from his being spelt Hendrik as a rule. I suppose the Dutch hoped that *would* be thought, from their tacking on the "k," for they were so jealous of each other, the Hollanders and the Puritans, in the days of the early un-settlers.

Frightfully geologic things seem to have happened and subsided under the Hudson, making it navigable all the way; otherwise New York City wouldn't be the greatest on the American continent. Jack was talking to me about this all along Riverside Drive, not that it would have mattered much, because New Yorkers could have



**STONYSHIRE**

"Washington Irving's dear old Dutch house is like a beautiful living body with his memory for its soul."



said it was the greatest to Chicago people just the same. I didn't dare make this remark to Jack, however, because he was being thrilled with thoughts of the Revolution and I wanted to encourage him in those. I hoped he wouldn't know about Fort Washington being the place of the fight that caused General Washington to give up Manhattan Island to his—Jack's—horrid ancestors; but he did know, and about the sloops and brigs and other things which we foxy little Americans had sunk there to keep the British ships from getting farther up the river. You can get tremendously excited about this Revolution business when you're on the spot, you see, though you and I have lived so much in England where most people treat it as a "brush" less important than the Boer War. And when you are here, surrounded with all the noisy progress and skyscraping greatness of our country, it is wonderful to think how a few brave men, determined to have their rights, in spite of desperate odds, made this vast difference in the world.

I was secretly longing to know what Jack would think of the dear Palisades, which seem so wonderful to us, and give us more of a feeling, somehow, than the highest mountains of Europe, Africa, or Asia. But he was most satisfactory about them. He didn't say much. He just gazed, which was better; and they were looking their grandest that day, like the walls of castles turned into mountains. And there were strange lights and shadows in the water which gave a magical, enchanted effect. There were thunderous violet clouds in the sky, with shafts of sunshine pouring through; and Jack and I discovered, deep down in the river, marvellous treasures of the

enchanted castles: white marble seats and statues, and golden vases, and drowned peacocks, with spread purple tails floating under the crystal roof which we call the surface of the river.

It does annoy me when Europeans patronize us about being a new country, doesn't it you? The Palisades, it seems, boiled up and took shape as a wall of cliff thirty million years ago, or maybe more, in the Triassic period. What can you get anywhere older than that? And Europe would give a cathedral or two out of her jewel-box to look young as long as America does!

We've got a queer old manuscript at Awepesha, which Jack has ferreted out of obscurity, telling the Indian legends of the Hudson River. They are as beautiful as anything from the ancient Sanscrit, and the Indians who lived on the Palisades' green tops, or along the shores beneath—the Hackensack, and Tappan Indians and others who have given their names to river places—had some of the best legends of all. I love the Woman of the Mountains (young and lovely, not old, as some people say) who had done noble service for the Great Spirit: as reward she had the privilege of cutting out a new silver moon every month with her magic shears, and when it was shrinking into uselessness, to snip what was left into little stars—as Juliet wanted done with Romeo! She lived in a wonderful purple cave, not in the Palisades, but hidden in the Catskills; and from its door, which no one could find, she sent forth Day and Night alternately. Also, in immense jars of porphyry and gold, she kept sunshine and storm, to let out when she thought best. Perhaps those purple splashes and golden gleams

we saw under the water were her storm and sun jars, which floated out of the cave and buried themselves in the sand poured down by Sandy Hook!

To jump from the Indian legends to the Dutch, I do trust the story of Spuyten Duyvil is true. It must be, because it's too good *not* to be true. Do you remember it's told in dear Washington Irving's "Knickerbocker History of New York?"—the most amusing history book ever written, I should think. The man—one of Peter Stuyvesant's men, I fancy—was hurrying to warn the farmers that the Beastly British were coming, and when there was no bridge by which he could cross the stream he vowed he'd do the trick "*in spuyt den duyvil.*" The history says he was drowned in the fierce waters, but I can't believe that part. I think his jealous rival—of course he had one—put *that* tale about. Of course he got across and warned the farmers, as he deserved to do for defying the devil.

I remember when I used to be at boarding-school in New York, and in spring we were taken little Saturday trips when we were good, the very name of "Yonkers" meant deadly suburban dullness to me. I only wanted to get past the place. But to motor through with Jack makes all the difference, even though by the time we reached there I was bristling with rage at sight of the doings of Caspian in the Grayles-Grice. We were trailing in the rear, so the troublous events — turbid emotions of the cars ahead were visible to us, as if they had been uncovered saucerpans boiling over on a redhot stove. Fancy that Caspian creature practically ordering Storm out to buy newspapers, as if he were a chauffeur! But Jack consoled

me: "Before you explode, stop and think what would have been the effect on you if Jimmy Payne had done that with poor old Brown."

Of course, I should have ached to box Jimmy's ears, and all my loyalty would have flowed out in waves to Brown; so perhaps Pat—but to go back to Yonkers. It makes the name sound less unsympathetic and like a frog's croak to recall that it was given when the Yonk Heer Vredryck Flypse, or Philipse (he who called New York "a barren island"), the richest and most important man of his day, from New York to Tarrytown, built one of his manor houses there. It's still there, by the way, and lots of other historic things, if one bothers to stop and dig them up, instead of dashing through with an admiring glance at the jolly modern houses, more conspicuous than the old.

We had a full day before us, what with worshipping at Washington Irving's shrine, and sighing over Sing Sing, and arriving at West Point in time for dress parade and to hear the sunset gun. So we flew fast through lovely Hastings-on-Hudson, and Irvington, over a silk-smooth surface, under an adorable avenue of trees which perhaps remembered the Revolution; past exquisite places where only exquisite people ought to live, to Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown. It seems sacrilege to arrive in autos and a hurry at a town with a name so deliciously lazy, to say nothing of its associations. But one can't help being modern!

I wonder if the comfortable Dutch settlers who pottered along this old A'bany Post Road ever dreamed nightmare dreams of creatures like us, tearing in strange machines

over surfaces magnificently bricked or oiled, and covering in one day distances to which they would prayerfully have devoted weeks? Probably they would have pitied and despised rather than envied us; and maybe they'd have been right: for does the extra ozone and the thrill of speed quite make up for things missed or half seen? Still, *impressions* are wonderful; and I shan't forget the bluebell colour of distant hills, the silver-gray of rocks, and the diamond-dazzle of water glimpsed between feathery tree branches, or the jewelled gleam of wild flowers scattered by the roadside, and the pale flame of mulleins straight and tall as lighted candles in the grass.

Isn't it a sweet thing for the world that there should have been men who loved making the rock-bound fields of history blossom with delicate flowers, just as monks of ancient days illumined quite dull texts?—men like Washington Irving, for instance.

I always loved Washington Irving, and so I'm glad to say did Jack; but he came back to life and actually walked with us that day. Perhaps it sounds impudent and conceited to say this, but I don't mean it so, and if he knew how humble and happy we felt as we came under his spell, I do think he wouldn't have snubbed us. No, he would never have snubbed any one! He was much too human, and *understanding*. He wouldn't scornfully have called us "tourists," but would have realized that we were worshippers at a shrine. Of course I *don't* include Ed Caspian or Mrs. Shuster! C., when the time came to leave our cars outside the with-difficulty-found gates of Sunnyside, put on the airs of a *grand seigneur* who knows all that is to be known already. He said (so Peter told us later):

"It's not much of a place; quite a small house, not worth getting out for." And he actually proposed that Patty should sit in the car with him while the others explored! Pat wasn't "taking any." She jumped out, and rather than see her walk away with Peter, C. had to follow. As for Mrs. Shuster, she can't bear to walk if there's a chance of sitting still, especially since she's taken to these fearfully tall-heeled, new-fashioned, high-necked boots which make our feet look like the hoofs of rather *chic* cows: incredible heels like the Venetian beauties used to wear. She, like Caspian, reminded her beloved of the blessing for those who only stand (sit!) and wait. But Larry said he'd something important to tell Pat; then strolled with Idonia Goodrich and never went near his daughter. Mrs. Shuster was reduced to her peace partner; and, oh, you can't think what she looks like when she pouts!

We had to thank Larry for an open sesame to the doors of Sunnyside, however; for he has some distant acquaintance with the grand-nephew of Washington Irving who has inherited the quaint, delightful house with its red gables and extraordinarily intelligent-looking windows. Anybody is allowed to peep inside the gates of the old place, but of course the house is only for friends or acquaintances, or it would be overrun and the family would have to take to the cellar. Pat had somehow forced Larry to write and ask permission, for he never puts pen to paper if he can help it!

Sometimes it's a blow to see where your favourite authors lived, but Washington Irving's dear old Dutch house is *just right*. It is like a beautiful living body with his memory for its soul: yes, a charming body with all his



"The old Dutch Church at Tarrytown"



quaintnesses and unexpectednesses and dainty mysteries. It looks at least as old as the seventeenth century, but only a nucleus of the rambling, many-windowed, creeper-clad mansion is really old. There's a romance about that part, by the way, but perhaps you know it better than I do.

Once upon a time, when Washington Irving was very young, he visited the Pauldings in a house swept away now. He used to take a boat and row all alone, to think thoughts and dream dreams under the willow trees that even then roofed the brook in Sunnyside glen. He could see a tiny house called "Wolfert's Roost," and said to himself, "If I could live here and have that for mine I should be perfectly happy."

It didn't seem then as if his wish could possibly come true, but he always kept it in his heart, and years later, after he had lived in London and been American Minister in Madrid, he came back to his first love, with money he had been saving up, to make it his own. He added and added again to the house, but contrived to give it the lovely look of having just grown up anyhow, as trees and flowers grow. That's partly because of its cloaks and muffs and boas of trumpet Creeper and ivy. It has the look, too, even now, of being miles from anywhere—except the river and the creek, which sing the same song they sang long ago, under the trees. The trees of Sunnyside are somehow curiously individual, Jack and I thought, as if they knew the historic reputation they had to live up to, and were gently proud of it. There are trees graceful as ladies dancing a minuet, spreading out their green brocade skirts for a deep curtsey; trees as spicily perfumed

as the pounce boxes of those same ladies; thoughtful trees whose one mission in life is to give deep shade under showering branches, and gay trees like sieves for sunshine. Jack and I wandered among them and then gazed out upon them, as Washington Irving must often have gazed (in search of new inspiration), through the small square panes of his study windows.

His descendants have changed nothing there, in that dear little modest nest for a genius! It's close to the front door, as you go in from the deep porch, at the right-hand side of a fascinating corridor. Looking down that corridor you see a vista of rooms, delightful as rooms in dreams. They are furnished, but not crowded, with old and exquisite things—things which must have been intimate friends of the family for generations; and, oh, how much more attractive are the rooms than any royal suites I've seen in palaces!

In the study (I feel sure *he* called it that, not library) the master of long ago might have walked a moment ago, out into the garden, so entirely does the room seem impressed with his personality. There are his books, his manuscripts, his pens; his desk, and his writing-chair drawn up to it; his little table; the charming old prints he loved, given to him and signed by friends whose names are famous; pictures of the house when it was "Wolfert's Roost," and when it had grown larger. The green and golden light streaming through the windows, front and side, seems just the sort of light that Washington Irving would have loved to write in. He made it greener and more inspiring by bringing from Melrose Abbey slips of the ivy which now curtains the windows; and in the green-gold light he wrote

his "Life of Washington" and many other things which we all love.

Coming out of the study when we were ready to go away, I looked through the open door of a beautiful room across the corridor, straight into an old-fashioned mirror. Never was a mirror so becoming. I felt as if I were seeing my own portrait painted by Romney; and behind me for an instant I seemed to catch a fleeting glimpse of another face, as though a man stood on the study threshold, smiling to me a kind good-bye. I adore my own imagination. After Jack, it is my best and dearest chum!

I think even if one didn't know that thrilling things had happened in Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow (heavenly names!) in old days, one would somehow *feel* it. What's the use of one's subconscious self if it doesn't nudge one's subjective self and whisper that *it* was born knowin'?" Why, I could see Sir Vredryck Flypse and his family streaming out of the old Dutch church, as gorgeous in their Sunday best as the church was simple; the ladies' stomachers embroidered with silver and seed pearls, their short, stiff brocade skirts swinging to show their silk stockings and high-heeled shoes, much as ours do now; the men taking a sly pinch of snuff, and brushing it hastily off their blue or gray coats; tie-wigs, silver buttons, and knee breeches glittering in the sunshine of such a day as this, away back in sixteen hundred and something. I can see neat, consciously aristocratic and good Dominie Mutzelius or Dominie Ritzema in irreproachable black, with a touch of white, going as guest to Sunday dinner at Philipsburg Manor, after the "great people" had listened to his eloquence, seated in their cushioned "boxes" in the seven-

windowed churc . There are only six windows now; but in those days you had to keep your window and weather eye open, even during the dominie's discourse, for Indians might take a fancy to scalp the congregation if it could be taken unawares. Luckily the lord of the manor, and his friends, and the sturdy farmers with their families, were not to be caught napping, even if the sermon were dull and the weather hot. Besides, in case of emergency, they could turn their church into a fort at a few minutes' notice. The walls were nearly three feet thick; the seven windows were barred with iron, and so high up that, if the Indians wanted to peep, they had to climb on each other's shoulders. As for the doors, they could hardly be knocked in with a battering ram; so you had no excuse to stop at home on Sunday, even in "Indian Summer." Of course we went to see the grave where all that is mortal of Washington Irving lies in the Sleepy Hollow cemetery; and the famous bridge—or, rather, the new edition of it built by William Rockefeller.

Do you remember that Major Andre was taken on the Albany Post Road at Tarrytown on his way to New York, with dispatches from the traitor Benedict Arnold hidden in his stockings? I've always had a sneaking sympathy with Andre, because he was gallant and young and good looking, but Tarrytown isn't the place, I find, in which to express any such sentimental feeling. He is still the villain of the piece there, a mere spy, travelling in disguise, a treacherous wretch who long and stealthily worked to corrupt a hitherto honourable general. He is the villain, and David Williams, John Paulding, and Isaac Van Waart, the scouting militiamen who took and searched

him, are the heroes of that drama of 1780. Tarrytown people are delighted to this day that Andre was hanged, and they love the monument to his captors who wouldn't be bribed by horse, or watch, or money. I suppose if Andre hadn't offered those bribes, or said he belonged to the "Southern party," they might never have thought of his stockings, he would have got safely to the waiting ship, and on to New York; and Benedict Arnold would have surrendered West Point to the British!

Heaps of other exciting things helped to make Tarrytown historic: an Indian massacre, a big battle in the Revolution, Major Hunt's "bag of British soldiers at Van Tassel's Tavern when he won fame by his shout, 'Gentlemen, clubs are trumps!'" and so on. But we took even more interest in the old legends of Spook Rock, and Andre's ghost and Cuffy's Prophecy and the Flying Dutchman, who of course tacks back and forth across the Tappan Zee. Such things are so much more real than facts! Besides, we had to "get on—get on!" that war cry of motoring men.

We did get on, along the smooth brick road to Ossining, which is really Sing Sing, you know (or ought to, if you don't), only Ossining is the old Indian name, so they took it back to escape the blight. It's such a pretty town that it would have been a shame to associate it only with the state prison, whose high gray walls are the only grim thing in the landscape. It was for the sake of staring at them, though, and shivering down our spines that we took the detour to Ossining. When we had shivered enough we turned back to Tarrytown and drove our motors like docile cattle on board a steam ferryboat which took

us across the river to Nyack, the dearest, quaintest of little Dutch towns. It looks as lazy as, and more obstinately old-fashioned than, Tarrytown, though Tarrytown is far more important and impressive.

There's a colony of frame houses in Nyack which makes you feel you've suddenly tripped and stumbled out of the twentieth century back into the early nineteenth; and we lunched in a charming little hotel that gave us things to eat equal to any restaurant in New York.

We had a divine run from Nyack, through a fairy forest, with Hook Mountain in sight and the Ramapo Hills on the horizon. Hook Mountain glowed a bright rose colour wherever its green cloak was torn; and when we came into sudden sight of the river there was a magical effect: a veil of silver mist, with boats big and little moving behind it, like white swans. We had woods all the way to Rockland Lake, where the great icehouses loomed like queer castles, until we ran down to lake-level and lost the illusion. Then we turned in the direction of Haverstraw, going through the nice old-fashioned village of Congers. The hills and tiny valleys were as gay and pretty as the summer day! We could hardly realize that we weren't very far from New York, it all seemed such lovely *lost* country, private and purposely hidden, as if strangers had no right to be there.

Soon the gay little hills were playing they were mountains, and almost making us believe that they really were. The roadsides were like rock gardens, spangled pink and gold and blue. Far below lay the river, but it looked vast enough to be a wide lake; and always the "surface" was so perfect we had the sensations of flying.

At Haverstraw we were by the river, and even the brick-fields contrived to take on a gorgeous, glittering colour in the afternoon sun. Stony Point, a high rocky promontory just above, is the place where "Mad Anthony Wayne" stormed the fortress thought to be impregnable. The British called it "Little Gibraltar." Jack had been looking out for that and the ruins of the old fort, because daredevil Wayne is quite one of his heroes. The whole peninsula here is a public park, so no wonder everything is beautifully kept!

I think we got lost after this, owing to Ed Caspian, who led the procession and was sure he knew the way. However, we reached West Point somehow, after two or three wrong but delicious detours, returning on our own tracks each time. Jack and I didn't care, but we could see the back of Mrs. Shuster's head sulking itself almost off, and Patsey's hat looking careworn and sad. It must have been wretched for her, seeing all these heavenly things with nobody except Ed Caspian to say "Oh!" to: flowery meadows, weeping willows like waving fountains of silver, cedars standing among them like tall black monks, dark bulks of near mountains, blue ghosts of far ones; ferns and wild flowers sprouting from every rock; here and there a shining streak of waterfall. What matter if we did go wrong, and risk missing West Point to reach Tuxedo, instead of saving the latter till next day? We spared ourselves that mistake, and came back to the right road after twice passing a glorified log cabin of an inn all balconies and rich brown wood on a stone foundation. Mountains seemed to reach toward each other across the shining river, and then to open out into

a long corridor, dark walled and paved with silver. There was a lake with an island and a pavilion: Iona Island —too beautiful to pass as we did pass; a bridge over a steep rocky gorge, and a river-glimpse mysterious as the backgrounds of old Italian pictures. But we turned away from it into woods—deep forests of cedars fragrant as smoking incense, and at last—rather late because of side wanderings—we came to Highland Falls.

I remember your telling me that your first love was a West Point cadet, who proposed to you on your sixteenth birthday in "Flirtation Walk." Lucky you! But this was my first glimpse of the place as we drove through gates from Highland Falls into the Government Reservation. We meant to arrive, shed the dust at our hotel, and then saunter forth for dress parade, but instead of that we had to see the great sight of the day sitting in our motors. The poor Hippopotamus did look antediluvian among all the smart cars and carriages assembled! But the rest of us weren't so bad, even after a day's run, and, anyhow, we had no time to ~~think~~ of ourselves, there was too much else to think of.

I wonder if the place has changed much since that sixteenth birthday of my Mercédes? Of course it's only a *very* few years ago! Not being Aunt Mary, I won't make any remark about the number. But if you haven't quite forgotten that first love, doesn't it make your heart beat to think of those great terraced, castellated buildings of gray stone massed against the cliffsides above the sparkling river, almost Walhalla-like in grandeur, of the gracious elms and the prim soldierly barracks draped with ivy, of the vast parade ground and the wonderful

grouping of mountains whose shapes lie reflected far down under the crystal water, Cro' Nest, haunted by the "Culprit Fay," and Storm King; and little Constitution Island which tried its best to stop the British ships.

I wish a cadet had fallen in love with me! I wish one would do it now! I adored them all as I sat in the motor watching the ranks of white-clad figures moving to music and looking, in the late sunshine against their green background, like hundreds of marble statues come alive. When they stood to "attention" they were like snow men. Oh, and what music it was, to which they moved! Jack said there couldn't be a scene of its kind half so fine and picturesque anywhere else in the world. I felt quite proud to have been born an American as I looked at it, and so, judging from their expressions, did crowds of pretty girls who gazed adoringly at all those soldiers in the making. It worried me a little, just when the music was at its noblest, that a man in a motor *char-a-bancs* or something huge and touristy should be telling his victims how West Point had been "the key to the Hudson," and what a fatal blow would have been dealt to hopes of independence if Benedict Arnold could have handed it over to the British. I thought he glared at Jack as he delivered this lecture, guessing perhaps by the shape of his particularly nice nose that he's a Britisher. But just then the sunset gun was fired, echoing again and again among the mountains. All the female victims squeaked and stopped their ears, and the man jumped, so that Jack was saved.

You, who have happy memories of Flirtation Walk, will pity Pat when I tell you that her sensitive conscience

made her consent to walk there . . . Ed Caspian after dinner, Jack and Peter Storm and I following at a respectful distance. Peter could hardly bear it. I suppose the moonlight on the water glinting far under the high cliff walk and the bitter-sweet scent of the ferns went to his head. He forgot that we'd all planned together this way of disgusting Pat with what she thought her duty—throwing her so constantly with Caspian that she'd find out all his faults. But when Peter was leading up to some excuse for joining the pair in front, Jack reminded him that if ever the medicine could be beneficial to the poor little patient it would be in such a scene, and on such a night made for love and happiness.

Mrs. Shuster and Larry and Idonia were walking, too. I believe Larry had intended to take Idonia alone, having advised Lily to rest, but Lily passionately refused to rest. Fancy her on Flirtation Walk!

West Point is a *witching* place to spend a night in, even though a dance—or a “hop,” or whatever they call it—is going on, and *you’re* not invited!

Next morning, after lingering again at Battle Point to drink in as lovely a view as the world can give, we dashed off once more. It was just the hour of “Guard mount,” and the cadets looked too fascinating. The girls gazed at them as if they were the heroes of a hundred battles, and so, in a way, they were and are: at least, as West Pointers they’re heirs to those who fought a hundred battles. Jack read in some book that out of sixty battles in the Civil War fifty-six had for commanders men from West Point—and not all on one side! Of course, they fought in the old Mexican War as well, for West Point

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### THE HUDSON RIVER

"When we came into sudden sight of the river there was a magical effect: a veil of silver mist, with boats big and little moving behind it, like white swans."



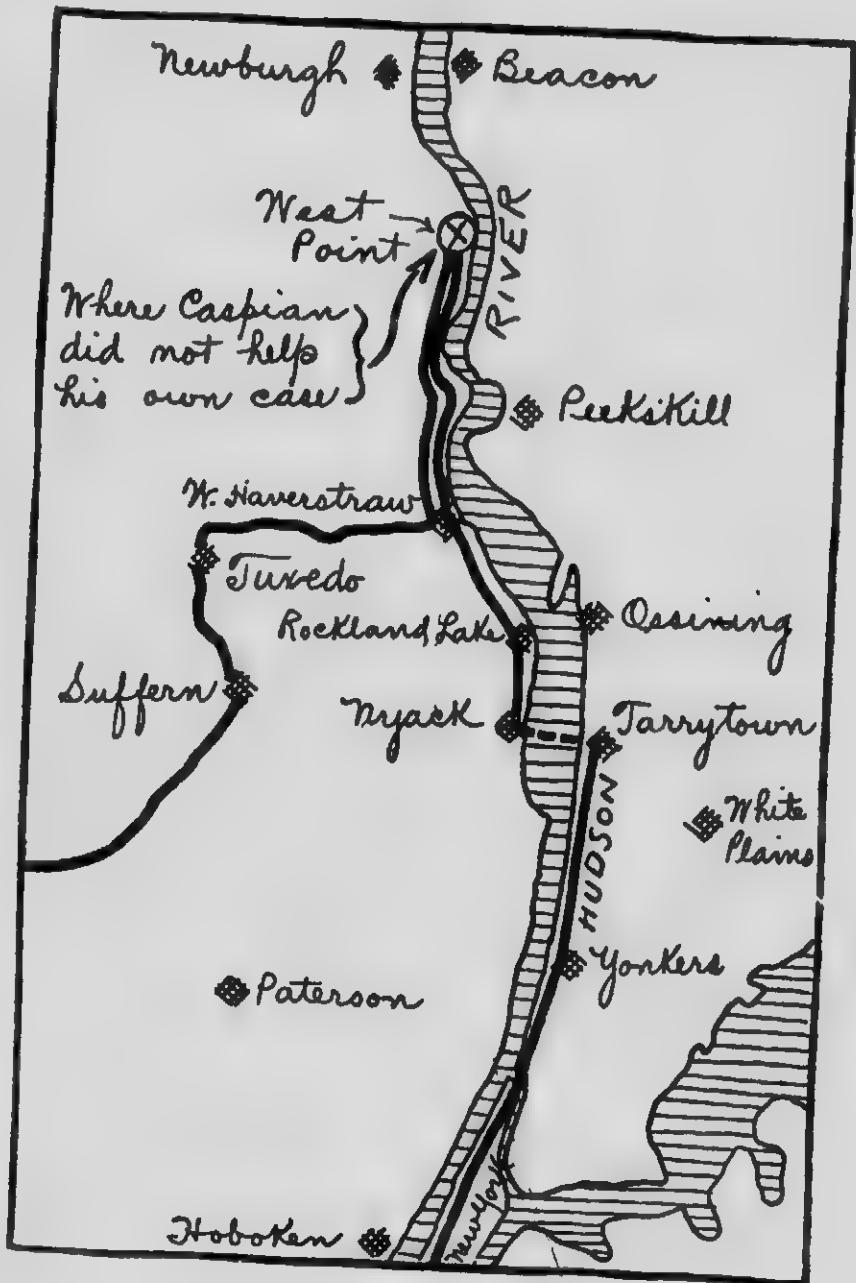
has been a training school ever since 1794. That seems a long time in America!

We had a gorgeous run to Tuxedo—a road that might make Europe jealous—among mountains of the Catskill family, too important and beautiful, I thought, to dismiss as foothills. What a pity Rip Van Winkle spent all his twenty years asleep in one place! *I* should have walked in my sleep, and changed my bed from mountain to mountain every night or so. Oh, I forgot to tell you, at West Point I heard a new legend of the Catskills. At least, it's so old that it's as good as new. Once when the Indians were just comfortably beginning to feel at home after one of those interrupting Ice Ages, there lived a fearful giant with a wife and children as terrible as himself. The only things they cared to eat were Indian babies; and after this horrid family had been vainly admonished for their ways by the Great Spirit they were suddenly, in the midst of a meal, turned into stone. Being so big, they became mountains, and as some tried to run away and escape the others' fate, they grouped themselves in a chain along the riverside. I don't quite believe this story, though! I'd rather think that a *good* family of giants asked the Great Spirit to let them become beautiful mountains when they died, and so be remembered lovingly forever, while the world lasts.

The Ramapo Valley is a dream of loveliness all the way, with its lakes like wide-open blue eyes of dryads, and its laced silver ribbon of river. Larry has a friend at court—I mean Tuxedo Park; so he was again useful as well as ornamental—a rare thing for him! We sailed in at the queer gates as confidently as if we owned a hundred acres

of land and a lake inside the magic circle. Only the Hippopotamus balked. He had tire trouble just inside the entrance to Paradise; but I think he could have crawled in if Tom, Dick, and Harry had urged him a little. They, poor boys, are under a cloud since Pat's engagement was announced, and are only going on as a sort of mute protest against its irrevocability. If it were any one else except Caspian—Peter Storm, for instance—they would bravely retire from the field with congratulations for the victor, but they have a vague idea in their nice heads that Pat isn't happy and may have to be rescued when the time comes, but they must have felt that nothing so violent could happen in a place as "exclusive" as Tuxedo Park. By the way, don't you hate the expression "exclusive" in connection with society? I do think it quite naively snobbish, not to say un-Christian! How much more heart-warming to speak of an *inclusive* place or entertainment! However, we humans haven't mounted to that height yet; and "exclusive" being not only the word but the feeling at Tuxedo, the Boys felt themselves and the Hippopotamus unsuited to the occasion. Consequently they broke down outside the sacred precincts, and we glided past the graystone, red-gabled portals while they grouped round a tire to hide the fact that it was flat.

We spent the morning with Larry's friend for our guide, seeing one grand private place after another. His own is almost the grandest of all, and is on a lake fringed with feathery trees which weave a gold-green network across the blue. The golf course is perfectly beautiful, and made me for the first time want to learn. I never have, because it seems to me a middle-aged, pottering game; and I've





always so hated staying at country houses with golf lovers who talk of nothing else. Anyhow, I don't want to have a golf complexion until I'm forced to be over twenty-six.

The gardens of the Tuxedo Park dwellers are really bits of Eden, although you would have to bite a bit out of the apple before you could be sophisticated enough to make them grow like that. We lunched with Larry's friend, and should have enjoyed the feast immensely if Ed Caspian hadn't put on multimillionaire airs, and snubbed Peter Storm at the table. Pat turned crimson, and I hoped that good might come out of evil—that she might break off with the rude wretch as a punishment. Peter behaved so well that he deserved such a reward. Jack and I were proud of him! But the engagement survived the earthquake, as an ugly house of "reinforced" cement will stand when medieval castles fall. I found out afterward why, and I'll tell you presently. As for Mrs. Shuster, I was rather sorry for her. She sat opposite Larry and beside her incarnate Peace Tract, Larry being at his hostess's left hand with Idonia Goodrich on his other side. The hostess is a beauty, so is Idonia, so you may well imagine that Larry would have forgotten Lily's existence if she hadn't frequently reminded him of it by screaming his Christian name across banks of pansies and orchids. J. and I hoped that jerry-built betrothal might crumble in consequence, as Larry's fastidiousness is his most prominent feature. But no! it also stood; and I will tell you the reason when I tell you about Pat.

Things were going on normally—and hatefully—when we bade Tuxedo Park farewell, and found the Boys eating sausages and drinking ginger-beer. We sailed about see-

ing scenery for part of the afternoon—scenery of the Ramapo Valley and round Suffern, I mean—and falling more and more in love with the Ramapo River. It has cataracts and wide-open spaces; secret, hidden mysteries; Revolution history, and enough beauty and charm of every sort to suffice three rivers instead of one. But we'd set our hearts on spending the night at the Delaware Water Gap, so we had to rush on in that irritating way which becomes a habit hard to break. It's an obsession with even the least offensive motorists—like Jack and me!

There can't be *sweeter* country anywhere than this, which I'm trying to lure you to come and see when you and Monty can take your second honeymoon, as we are doing; but it has no look of being *undiscovered* like some we saw the day before. Rich people, but luckily people of taste, know all about that cup of crystal, Pompton Lake, the sweet singing Wanaqua River, and lovely Pequannock Park. They have made homes for themselves, quite wonderful in beauty, and never pretentious; never a staring house or grotesquely expensive gates to shock the dear little childlike mountains and shady river. Along the winding roads, where trees trailed shadows like dragging masses of torn Spanish lace, there were fine stone walls draped with woodbine, and among the folding hills were orchards like great flower-beds, surrounding the most lovable and livable houses. Every five minutes we would come to a picture which might have been "composed" by an artist: a pond reflecting a quaint little church with two guardian grandfather trees, and a funny old "gig" with a yellow horse, waiting for some one we should never see; an ancient white house born to make a background for

cedars far more ancient; a lake with shining surface half hidden under red water-weeds like coral necklaces broken and scattered on a silver salver. Oh, and I mustn't forget the funny fire-alarms in front of isolated houses! A big thing like a split iron ring with a hammer to strike it. The ring vibrates better if it's split; and you could see nothing quainter in Holland. There was a very odd monument, too, which I loved. I think it was in the nice, wide-streeted village of Pompton. It might have been a Titan helmet smashed by a bomb, and I should have loved to stay and find out all about it!

We'd come into northern New Jersey at Oakland, so no wonder we saw splendid cedars, for New Jersey has lots of cedars and heaps of history, and is proud of both. I hadn't realized that it would be such a beautiful state of forest-clad hills, lakes and rivers that mingle so you can't tell where they begin or end, and villages walled by woods and tied together by silver ribbons of river or brook. This is the northern part I'm talking about; the south is flat, where it becomes seacoast.

Along bowery roads to Stockholm, Franklin, Lafayette we passed (later in the year the goldenrod must be like a sunburst there!), and motors, big and little, weave their way democratically among lazy-looking, old-fashioned chaises and slender "buggies." The "going" was always good, and there was some delicious "coasting" down one long, long hill almost like a mountainside. How Jack loved the cozy farmhouses and red barns which were so becoming to the black and white cattle grazing in the valleys; and the slender waving corn like fairy dancers in jewelled head-dresses! Some of the barns were so

big, the houses they belonged to reminded him of little mothers who had produced giant children. The homelike effect of all these gentle hills and flowery valleys and floating blue mist wreaths appealed curiously to the heart, like minor music; yet there were grand things, too: here and there a noble limestone cliff; a gloomy wood of hemlocks where it seemed *anything* might happen; a mossy dark ravine, as at Branchville; and all the large lakes or "ponds," so unexpected each time when you come in sight of them.

After a dear little town called Layton (with a river singing it to sleep) we turned off to the right for Dingman's Ferry, and then felt we were really on the way to the Delaware Water Gap. We had come to the Delaware River! From the top of a very high hill we saw it—the river, I mean; and, oh, but it looked worthy of its guardian mountains! Winding and wonderful it was in beauty as we dropped into its deep, intimate valley, down the tremendous slope. We were so excited we hardly knew the road was ba!! And after all there was no old ferry answering to the name of "Dingman," but a wide bridge in its place. On the other side was Pennsylvania, with a barred gate to keep you out of it until you had handed over forty cents to a wee boy who "held us up" and firmly said, "You've got to pay!" He lived in a pet of a house, where I should love to live, myself (with Jack), and the entrance to the neighbour state was so fine as to seem dramatic.

The smooth tarred road was a relief, too, after a few hard bumps: a lovely tree-shadowed road past a big yellow-painted hotel; past a delightful village high above the river bed, where a great forest made a dark, perfumed

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### DELAWARE WATER GAP

"Winding and wonderful it was in beauty, as we dropped into its deep,  
intimate valley, down the tremendous slope"



screen between our eyes and the bright glitter of water. So we dipped down by and by to a house with a garden full of flowers, and a forest of its own with the river sparkling through it. The hemlocks gave out a perfume as if a box of spices had been newly opened; and when we saw that the house was a hotel and restaurant we simply had to stop for tea. To our surprise and joy we found that the man who kept the place was a Frenchman—an Alsatian named Schanno; and everything he gave us was so delicious we might have been at Ciro's, in Paris or Monte Carlo!

Almost, it would have been a relief, said Jack, to find the scenery less beautiful, so as to have a diminuendo and a crescendo—the crescendo to be our goal of that day, the Water Gap. But it would keep on being so lovely, we could scarcely say when it was just good, when better, or when best. We had a gray road, glossy as a beaver's back, to travel on toward the Gap; a valley road with small mountains lifting curly dark heads in every direction to gaze down on us out of their glistening, perfumed foot-bath of evening mist. The villages we passed had pretty, sophisticated-looking new houses for "summer people"; here and there was a charming country inn with the air of being famous. At Bushkill (nice name!) the brown river forked, in a coquettish, laughing way shaking hands with itself and parting in the woods. Nearby was a glorious waterfall among charming hills which seemed to have been roused by the music of the cataract, and sat up with their hair standing all on end.

Four or five miles from the great Water Gap we began to see the formation which gives that name. The mountains seem cleft in twain. It's a marvellous effect—

startling! It took my breath away, as if I had seen a great window suddenly flung wide open in the sky. Truly, that's not an exaggeration of the sunset-wonder of the Delaware Water Gap! The hills were a deep, almost sullen purple that evening, the purple of darkest hyacinths. They made a high wall for the valley; then, in an instant, the wall was gone, as if hewed down with a firm, straight stroke, and there was that immense open window of golden light. Why, it was worth crossing the ocean to see as we saw it then! And we had come through such winding ways of hill and valley that it felt as if this were the end of the earth, the jumping-off place into a sea of jewelled colour. Yet they say it's only three or four hours in a fast train from New York! I don't want to believe that, and I shall never know by experience, for I shan't be so sacrilegious as to take a train while motors run on roads and aeroplanes skim through clouds.

The town where the hotels and cottages are is as gay a little fairyland among the mountains as I used to think Baden-Baden or Carlsbad; just such maddeningly attractive little shops and bright gardens and beautifully grouped trees. We went on to a hotel in the woods, a hotel which seemed all veranda and view—a view our spirits drank in, in deep, unforgettable draughts: I mean, Jack's and mine drank. They were the only well-regulated, calm spirits in the whole procession, except the Goodriches, who are "always merry and bright."

When darkness fell in a shimmering blue curtain shot with silver, we found that the hotel had other things besides those two "Vs" which were all we had thought of at first: very nice, pleasant things, and Jack and I decided

that it wouldn't be wrong or selfish to the war, or each other, to let ourselves feel perfectly happy for a few serene hours. But it wasn't to be! Far from it—Fate has such a rude way of ignoring my plans and substituting her own, which are seldom a patch on mine!

I "got myself up to kill" for dinner, and thought Pat intended to do the same. Being made in the Creator's image, I like to look as nice as I can, to do Him credit, even when travelling, especially in large hotels full of other women. But Pat didn't appear. Neither did Larry. My eyes and Jack's conspired across the table. "Good!" we thought. "The Plot works!"

We couldn't tell by what process it worked, but that it did work we were sure, until Peter shook his head at the signal of our raised eyebrows. "Nothing has happened in the Grayles-Grice," his expression said; so the only hope left was the Wilmot. Anything that might take place there was of secondary importance, still, indirectly, a break there might bring relief to the other forces engaged. Instead of stopping downstairs to let the world admire my Paris frock, and listen to the music (not just nice little music for nice little minds, but something really good and suited to the scenery), I bolted my dinner and dashed up to Patsey's room.

A knock brought no answer, but when I called, "May I come in?" Patsey unlocked the door. You know how, when I want to get things out of people, I disguise myself with a spaniel smile and spaniel eyes? Well, I did that with Pat. There was just enough light in the room for her to see my spanielness, for she'd done away with all but one small reading-lamp, with a depressing green shade.

She was in her kimono, with her hair down, looking an ideal Ophelia. Not that Ophelia sported a kimono; but you know the effect I mean, all masses of wavy tresses round a small white face, and eyes very big and wistful. She wasn't going to tell me a thing, but my spanielhood melted her.

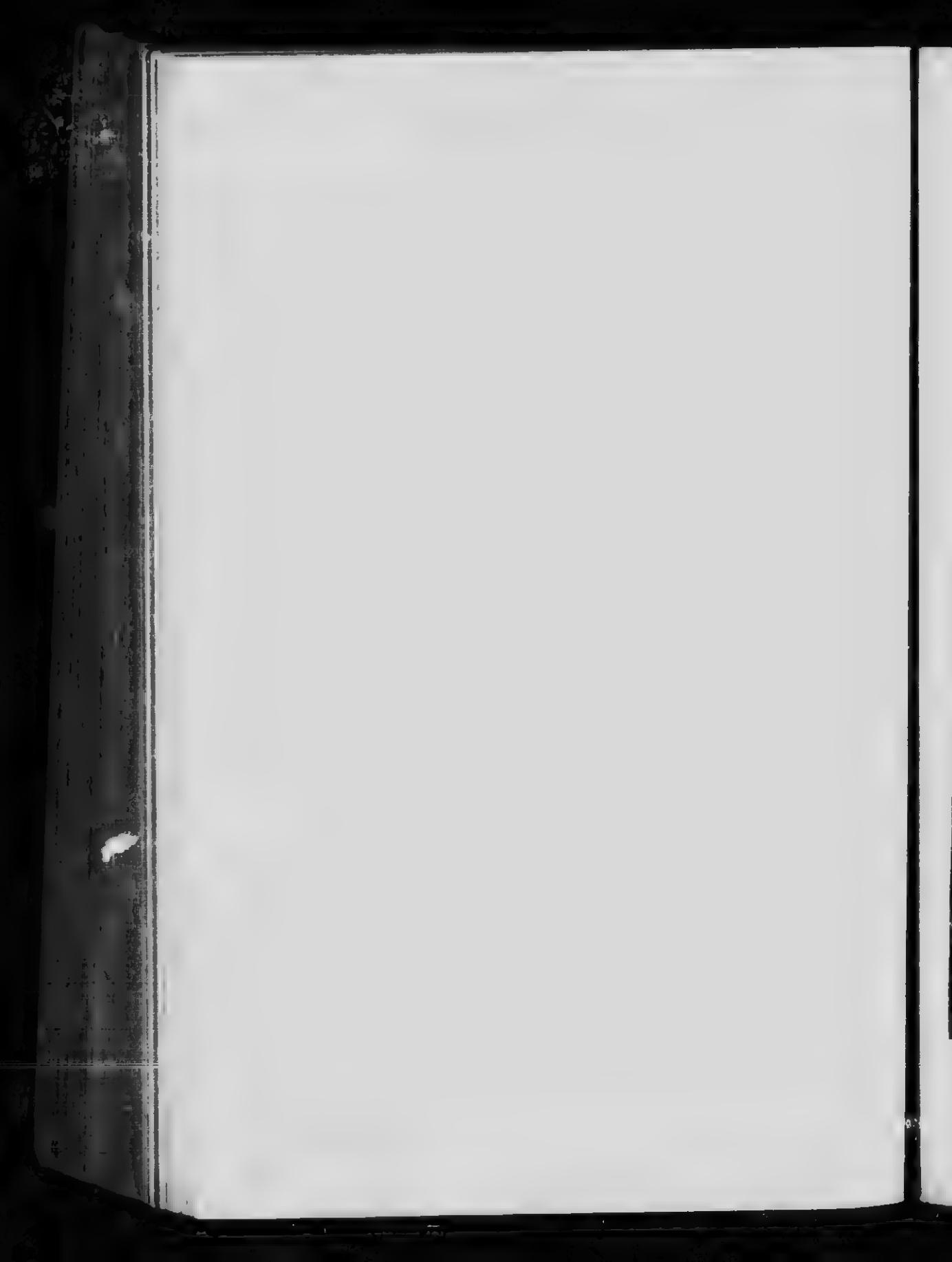
It was perfectly true, as Peter had warned me: nothing had happened in the car; but the night before in Flirtation Walk Caspian had tried to kiss the girl! He had wanted to before, when he gave her the ring; she had refused, explaining that the Marquise had told her she was not to be kissed before marriage. He hadn't persisted then, but last night he had been *horrid*. She would not have gone for the walk if he hadn't asked her before Larry, and Larry had seemed to want her to go. Perhaps it was only that she might be near, and protect him from Mrs. Shuster; but Idonia could have done that. Anyhow, Pat and "Mr. Caspian" (she would not call him "Ed") had got separated from the others. She had struggled, but he had succeeded in kissing her ear, and she had boxed his! "It can't be exactly wicked to marry for money," sighed Pat. "It's too disagreeable. And wicked things are always nice—in books. Oh, Molly, it will be awful to marry *him*. Already he tries to make me do what he likes. He puts himself in front of me and all r-round me like a barbed wire fence. I don't know how to bear it. I am a broken girl!"

I said Nonsense—she wasn't broken; but the engagement had much better be. "Give him back his ring," I went on. "Or perhaps you have given it? I see you haven't worn it since the first day."



### DELAWARE WATER GAP

"The mountains seem cleft in twain. It's a marvellous effect—  
startling!"







"It was too big, not suitable for motoring. And now—  
it is pawned," she announced.

"Pawned?" I gasped.

"Yes. I cannot tell you the rest. But—it makes  
it so that I must go on being engaged, in honour. I can-  
not now give the ring back."

I asked no more questions, but I guessed. Larry had  
had some big bill presented to him. Pat did not wish to  
wear the ring. What good was it to any one, then?  
Why should it not be "up the spout," instead of in a  
jewel-box? Larry would have argued.

While I was having my talk with Pat, Larry was con-  
fiding in Jack. He told him about the ring. I had  
guessed right. He had "acted impulsively." Mrs. Shuster  
was a more trying proposition than he had imagined,  
but he would have to "stick to it now," or he should  
never have money enough to redeem Pat's ring. Jack  
offered to lend the sum, but Larry wouldn't hear of that  
—was quite hurt; had only wanted sympathy. He has  
the quaintest code of honour! We had both to promise  
not to tell, and so we can't pass the news on to Peter.  
But sufficient to yesterday is the evil thereof!

I don't suppose Pat had slept; but luckily faces are  
being worn small and white this year, with eyes so big  
for them, and she looked as young next morning as if  
she had spent her night in paradise instead of far below  
that level. I felt horribly worried, because the plot  
wasn't working a bit, and I couldn't eat my breakfast  
(if this keeps up, I shall get so thin my veils won't fit!),  
but all the same I couldn't help enjoying the day. It  
was so nice, in spite of all, proving to Jack that you can

never exhaust the beauties of my country: there are always more to come! He had prophesied that after the Water Gap the rest of the trip would be an anticlimax. But he needn't have feared. The first stage of the way beyond gave us a new sensation. It seems the road is known to be one of the most exquisite in America; and indeed it was as well worth coming from Europe for as the Water Gap itself—worth even the risk of being torpedoed. Our procession seemed to pass through a painted and tapestried corridor, so pink and purple and azure and gold were the rocks that lined our way, with millions of delicate wild flowers. And oh, the retrospect view! It was wonderful, too, crossing by ferry, and looking back. Albertson's ferry we chose, and one car at a time rolled sedately on to a flatboat to be rowed to the opposite side of the river by a very young Charon in a very large straw hat.

We had groves to drive through, and little leafy roads like Surrey lanes, that looked innocent enough to lead nowhere, but somehow we managed to skip from valley to valley with a sensation almost of flying; and if the roads were like Surrey, the colour of the earth—when a bare place showed in a meadow—was rose-pink as Devon. Goldenrod, not yet in bloom, might have been planted purposely, in borders mixed with sumach. The red barns were bigger and "higher" than those of the day before, and the little stormhouses most inviting. It was quite a shock to find ourselves suddenly in "Vienna." (What if Jack should be interned!) But it was a miniature Vienna. Next came Hackettstown, a charming place, and then the famous Schooley's Mountain, which dropped

us down, down into German Valley. At Morristown we lunched, and afterward went to Washington's Headquarters, an adorable old yellow house almost as fine as Kidd's Pines. So by Persippany and Pine Brook to Jersey City and into New York: beauty and interest of one sort or other all the way, but our great object not accomplished. Everything worse than ever, and Pat and Larry each obstinately determined to be sacrificed. Oh, that Caspian man! I wish I had the formula for becoming a *werewolf*, and I would devour him!

Your every loving,

MOLLY.

## XVI

### ANGÉLE. PATRICIA'S MAID, TO THE MARQUISE DE MONCOURT

(*Translation*)

*Kidd's Pines.*

I take again the liberty of communicating with Madame la Marquise, having as always her interests at heart.

Matters develop after a manner somewhat serious since my last letter. The engagement of this poor charming gentleman to the altogether undesirable Madame Shuster touches a sharp crisis. I had the highest hopes that constant association of some days in an automobile might force a crash, as it was but the spirit of *laissez faire* and the pressing need of money which led Monsieur into the ambush, as Madame la Marquise already knows. I am not carried on these frequent and sudden excursions which have become a family custom with us; for I was obliged firmly to make Mademoiselle comprehend that I could not in self-respect run myself off my feet to wait upon the numberless ladies stuffed in fashion of sardines into these conveyances. To be the slave of half a dozen *bourgeoises* does not comport with the dignity of one who for years served Madame la Marquise and indeed indirectly serves her still. I was not therefore acquainted with the events of the tour which followed the two betrothals, until after the return of the expedition; and it was

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a great disillusion for me to find that the unfortunate gentleman and the less than lady were still in the same relation.

As for Mademoiselle and the millionaire, they also return as they went; but that is not of importance to Madame la Marquise, who wishes only the future high position of her friend's daughter. That will be assured through this marriage. The one danger is that both engagements are bound up together by a singular entanglement. I will explain to Madame la Marquise.

I informed myself of the situation through overhearing (by accident, of course) a talk between Monsieur Moore and Mademoiselle. I knew already that a ring of great magnificence brought back after a special journey to New York by Monsieur Caspian did not please Mademoiselle. In fact she wore it only for a few hours, and on retiring to her room that night threw it so roughly on the *table de toilette* that it fell on the floor and rolled under the bed. Having engaged herself, she could not in ordinary circumstances refuse to wear the *gage d'amour* of her rich fiancé, even though three wild young boys, who stay here spending money for love of her, choose to laugh at the size of the diamond and compare it to the headlight of a locomotive. I heard them pretend to suffer pain in the eyes from its intense brilliance, and they even went so far as to manufacture for themselves green shades to tie over the forehead, which gave them a ridiculous appearance and set all the world laughing. No! Mademoiselle was obliged to have a more reasonable excuse for taking from her finger the sign of her betrothal. But she found one without difficulty. Myself, I heard

her plead to Monsieur Caspian that for the risks of these tours in automobile a jewel of this value was unsuitable. She requested him to keep the ring in safety not only for a few days but some weeks, as there was question of a longer expedition through several eastern states.

This Monsieur Caspian wisely refused to do, realizing no doubt that if the jewel returned to his possession a further pretext might be found why it should remain there. There was a lively discussion outside the door of Mademoiselle where Monsieur had pursued her, I being stationed inside. Finally it was agreed that Monsieur Moore should place the ring in a safe. And from this discussion all the trouble in ridding himself of Madame Shuster has resulted.

Now I arrive at the conversation overheard by me, after the short tour of three days from which I had hoped much for the unselfish interests of Madame la Marquise. I was in the wardrobe of Mademoiselle on the night of the return—one of the strange wardrobes which in this country they dig into the wall instead of placing against it. I was engaged in hanging up the dresses which Mademoiselle had taken with her (shockingly wrinkled!) when she came—I might say bounced like a young panther—into the room with Monsieur her father. The wardrobe door was open, but rather than interrupt them at such a crisis, by showing myself, I very discreetly and without sound closed it to a certain extent.

This poor Monsieur was in great trouble. Money is for him but something to be exchanged for pleasures of one kind or another. He is not a man to study mean economies, and it is for that he is of an attraction so great for all

the world, especially for women. What more could be asked of him for the good of his child than to consent that so beautiful an old property should be vulgarized as an hotel? Money comes in, much money, I believe, but there are great debts. Monsieur had become bankrupt. A percentage must, in honour, be paid to those who trusted him. About however, that was not quite all. Madame la Marquise will remember the last visit of Monsieur Moore to France, and how he persuaded her by telegram to go with friends and see him win great sums at Monte Carlo. Unfortunately after she obeyed, the winnings ceased, and there was nothing agreeable to see. On the contrary! Well, it appears that in New York there are several of these establishments. Monsieur had very good luck before our arrival from France. He tested it too often, however. At these places are men who watch the tables and lend money to players. They demand outrageous interest, and they must be paid, or there are anxieties. Knowing the good income from the income of the hotel, one of these birds of prey took advantage of Monsieur Moore's impulsive nature. The results were disastrous.

The conversation which so accidentally reached me could not have been the first on the subject. At least one other I had missed, or I should not have neglected reporting to Madame la Marquise. In speaking the father and daughter referred to matters not only already discussed but arranged. I learned that in desperation, through these ignoble creditors, Monsieur Moore had placed the ring not in the safe but in the Mont de Pieté, which here is called the pawnbroker, or uncle. Made-

moiselle had evidently regretted it, fearing that the procedure was not honest, but Monsieur had convinced her that, as the jewel was her property, she had a legal right to dispose of it. And indeed, for all I can tell to the contrary, the thing had been done before she was consulted.

No doubt Monsieur was right in his assertion about legality, if the engagement continued. But I learned as I hung up the dresses that both Mademoiselle and her father had reached the point of high exasperation with the fiancé and fiancée. They both wished to break. Yet what was to be done? Mademoiselle could not give back the ring to Monsieur Caspian. Monsieur Moore, who had still other debts not yet settled by the uncle, could not burst the bond which—being known to outsiders—procures him a certain indulgence. Madame Shuster is rich!

They now all start off once more in automobiles; but short of murder or suicide I do not see how Monsieur Moore is to escape his *ennuis*. I do not venture to suggest any action to Madame la Marquise, but I have again faithfully represented to her the situation of her friend. And I am as always her devoted servant,

ANGÉLE.

## XVII

### PETER STORM TO JAMES STRICKLAND

DEAR STRICKLAND:

These few hasty lines in answer to your question, which, if I'd had my wits about me, I should not have waited for you to ask. No apology do I make, however, as you know as well as I do that my wits are not wool but rose gathering.

I inquired of Moncourt before starting off again whether he had heard anything lately from young Marcel. It was rather a delicate subject to open with him, as you can readily believe, it having been dropped between us by common agreement. He's extremely sensitive, and highly nervous like *all* great artists such as he is, but I was as tactful as possible, and finally got out of him that he had no tidings whatever for nearly a year. "No news was good news," he had tried to persuade himself, and the last thing he'd heard, Marcel was doing pretty well in the Argentine. When I'd worked up to mentioning the brilliant comet calling itself de Moncourt which has suddenly appeared in French skies, the old boy reflected, then gave it as his opinion that it can hardly be *our* Marcel who has lanced himself upon this adventure. Unless, of course, Marcel Junior felt it his duty—or his pleasure—to give up his personal interests and join the French Army! That suggestion (mine) struck and rather pleased Moncourt. But in spite of it, we both agree that, considering all things,

Marcel wouldn't dare tempt Providence by taking the bold line ascribed to the "rich new American cousin" of the Marquise de Moncourt and her family. Besides, if he were in the army, and on leave, Miss Moore's friend wouldn't speak of him as an American, would she? However, write circumspectly to the man you mention in Paris and try to make sure, as that will be best for all concerned.

As for my affairs, they go vilely. Having sown dragon's teeth all my life I now expect to reap strawberries and cream, so I suppose I can't complain if I don't get them.

Yours ever,

P. S.

## XVIII

### MOLLY WINSTON TO LORD AND LADY LANE

*New London.*

DEAR DUET:

I nearly said "dear people," but Aunt Mary used to impress upon me when I was small that *two* could not be called "people." "People" must mean a "company or crowd"; and I used to addle my infantine brain wondering how it could be that "two was a company," if two *couldn't* be a crowd, yet a company and a crowd were the same thing. Two must be spoken of as "persons" according to Aunt M., and I can't address you as "Dear Persons," can I?

You will judge from this prelude that I have come into Aunt Mary-zone again. Well, I have: we have not visited her yet; but she has been to New York on business and I know just how old I am, how many freckles I have on my nose, that my hair is shades darker than it used to be, and that I must have gained at least an inch round my waist since we saw each other last. As for Jack, she wonders I let him tear about the country the way we are doing. Her opinion is that he would be better off in bed, though she's glad to see him of course. If only I could retaliate in kind, couldn't I be cattish? But *noblesse oblige!*

Jack and I are as proud as Punch (and Judy) that the travel letters make you both want to come and do likewise.

Ah, if you could! But we'll do as you ask: go on as we've begun, and so if possible carry you with us in spirit. I say "we," because, though I do the writing, Jack has been keeping rough, joggly notes taken down *en automobile* for me to incorporate in my letters to you. We were at Awepesha orly a few days after I wrote you last, because Sir George Bingham and his wife, who are distant cousins of Jack's, arrived in New York after exciting adventures in the East, and as they couldn't leave town we went to visit them at their hotel. Just for the first day it was quite a relief to have something new to think of, and not worry my gray matter constantly over Patricia Moore's affairs, but the second day I was dying to know how things were going at Kidd's Pines; and when the time came to join the party (as we had promised) for the New England trip, I was all joy and excitement at the thought of plunging into the vortex again—in spite of the visit to Aunt Mary looming ahead. And then, I'm always happy to be in a car. Not that I love all cars indiscriminately—I don't. I love the one I'm in, and tolerate those that others are in when the weather's fine. In dust and mud I loathe all except my own, and feel they have no right to exist. Indeed, *none* have quite the individuality they used to have when they were a new breed of beasts; don't you find it so? Nothing ever happens to the good ones. They never break down and sob by the roadside and have to be petted and comforted by their mothers and fathers, as in the dear dead days of long ago. Of course we hated to have them break down then, and longed for the time when they should be improved beyond that stage, but I do find them a little *too* eugenic now.

Well, to go back to the creatures who haven't improved — ourselves and others.

Jack and I had our auto in New York, so we started from there, as before, and this time met the procession at Rye. Only think, on the way, after crossing the Bronx River we paused a few minutes to gaze at a cottage where Edgar Allan Poe once lived. It didn't look a bit like him, or as if he could have lived there, but we were glad to have seen it. As for New Rochelle, it's as pretty and fresh and fashionable as a summer bride. I always pretend to myself when I read Mrs. Cutting's stories about those dear, human young married couples or engaged girls and boys of hers, that they live in New Rochelle, outside the "smart" circle which only the most ambitious ones can ever hope to enter.

We loved coming on to the old Post Road between Boston and New York, but I've told you already how Jack and I feel about Post Roads, and wouldn't dream of writing the words without capitals. It may be conceited (or isn't it conceit to boast of one's husband?), but I don't believe most of the automobilious travellers we met, evidently native-grown Americans, knew or cared half as much about the history of every mile as did my English Jack. You can guess pretty well by people's faces whether they're saying to themselves, "How long will it take me to get there?" or "This used to be an Indian trail before it was a Post Road"; or "Paul Revere rode this way"; or "Fenimore Cooper once lived at Heathcote Hill and wrote 'The Spy'" (delicious book!); "Here, close by Mamaroneck, is a chimney of the old house where the hero of the story was hidden; here at Christchurch, in charming little

Rye, Fenimore Cooper's eyes have gazed on the silver chalice presented by Queen Anne." Fancy the difference travelling with a person whose visage expresses that wild, road-pig desire to get on at any price, and one like Jack, who has the "I want to see and know all that's beautiful" face!

Talking of faces, I wish you could see Ed Caspian's when he motors. He's so anxious to look as if he had done it all before, in a better car if possible, that he's like an image of Buddha reflected in a convex mirror. His cap is quite wrong, too. He thinks it's heather mixture, but it's the purple of a bruise. Peter's is exactly right. As for Pat's—well, a girl's hat should be her crowning glory, shouldn't it? Hers is; and it is becoming to Pat to be sad and puzzled about life. But all this is an "aside." I, too, must "get on!" And to get on, we go through Portchester, which is like melting a map of Poland and a map of Italy, and mixing them together, because there are so many Poles and Italians there. We came to Portchester along a lovely, shady road, and it's really an old place, though it looks new. We had a river to cross named after an Indian village jokingly called "Bay Rum," but they've decorously altered it to Byram; and on its other side we were in Connecticut, which Jack pronounces *precisely* as it's spelled! These English!

Greenwich was our first Connecticut town, a charming introduction to a new state: highroad and streets thickly tree-lined, and once, when we lost ourselves at a turning, we passed exquisite houses in lovely gardens. There was a divine smell of ozone-haunted seaweed in the air, for Greenwich is on Long Island Sound, with gold-green

sedgy shores, and everybody is rich or richish. Surely, though, the people are not "exclusive" in that selfish way I hate, for in this part of the world they can prowl all over each other's lawns; they have hardly any fences. It seems, however, that things are *very* difficult politically. You can't do your hair in a new way without asking permission! I simply would, wouldn't you? and do it so prettily they couldn't fuss. Yet the really exciting thing about Greenwich is not the way you do your hair or moustache. It is the cottage where (apropos of moustaches) General Israel Putnam was shaving off his when British soldiers rudely surprised him. The cottage is on the road, a beautiful road, and it's a still more beautiful stone cottage, with a flag and two cannons on the lawn. Certain horrid people say he lived at another house, but probably that's because they wanted to get the cottage cheap for themselves! You have only to look at it, to feel that General Putnam must have lived there. As for the creatures who insist that he took a mere cowpath for his great escape, and didn't ride down the old stone steps on the face of the cliff, why, they wouldn't dare repeat it in front of his monument in Putnam Hill Park, I'm sure!

When you get out of a town or village here, in a minute you might be a hundred miles from anywhere, and living a hundred years ago—except for motors; and you can pretend they are insects, if you like. There are sweet, mysterious byways which it breaks your heart not to see the end of, and ponds like the Long Island ponds, which is to say, like broken blue panes dropped from the windows of Heaven.

We took a détour after Coscob (an Indian-named village) because the road was being mended; and there was a little summer settlement called Sound Beach which I should *love* to have to play dolls in. It would be just right for that.

The big event of our morning, however, was seeing the famous Marks place. Every one is allowed to drive through, so we were not fortune's favourites, yet it was a favour of fortune to have such a vision. There's a romance about the ownership—rather a sacred and beautiful romance of love, and perhaps that partly accounts for the extraordinarily romantic effect of the place itself. Only a man inspired by love could have planned those mysterious flowery openings in the forest of hemlock which borders the lake as forests edge the lakes in the Trossachs. Only a man so inspired could have known just how to use his backgrounds of rock and cliff, or group his irises along the brookside, and mass his rhododendrons in the sunlight, where they blaze like the rose-flames of driftwood. I should hardly have been surprised if the swans floating like great lilies on the shining lake had all begun to sing some wonderful Wagnerian song in chorus.

We were in a dream as we sailed slowly out (yes, *slowly*, my dear, because motoring folk are kindly asked, "Hold ye speed to two and half leagues an hour") on to the Post Road again, under an arch of elms characteristic of New England, and of pure architectural value.

I could tell you things about each place we glided or tore through—treesy, yet important and city-like, like Stamford, where they make the Yale locks that burglars all over the world have cause to curse; elm-bowered

Darien; Norwalk, once a great shipping port for reluctantly banished oysters, managing still to be picturesque because of its pretty common where cattle have a *legal* right to graze; sweet old Westport, on an inlet of the Sound, dim with elm-shadow; Fairfield, with its beautiful old and new houses, its "village green," and its romance of John Hancock, who risked being caught by the British in order to meet and hastily marry Dorothy Quincy; but then, if I told you all that Jack and I told each other, there would be no room to tell you of ourselves. Besides, the whole thing is like a connected, serial story, in which the Post Road itself plays a leading part. One ought to begin with the early settlers, making the road which is so perfect now; then the Continental armies marching along it in the days when it was (luckily for the fighting Americans) still rough and difficult to travel. In spite of the neat prosperity nowadays, and the sign-posts which tell you everything you can possibly want to know about directions, it is easy to read the faded print of that long serial romance of generations. Old houses tell it, old trees tell it, old names tell it, and the very modernness of the new things emphasizes the heroic drama of the past. Think, for instance, of the boulder monument at Fairfield, commemorating its birth in 1639 and its burning by the British in 1779!

We crossed the river at Westport, and found the scenery even prettier than before. Then, after Fairfield, we came out on the Post Road again, though it called itself "Fairfield Avenue," and presently we were in a turmoil of life at Bridgeport. There was as much noise as in New York, but a hundred thousand people can make them-

selves heard in the world, especially if they're Americans! Haven't we read in the papers about immense buildings blowing up at Bridgeport since the war began? But we couldn't see anything that looked blown up, or sensational, except the heroes on posters of "movie" theatres —oh, more movie theatres than I thought there were in the world! We tried to listen through the roar and rumble of a big town for gorgeous distant yells of lions and trumpetings of elephants, but perhaps the dear beasts were off on "tour." Bridgeport is only the winter quarters of Barnum, and now we are on the way to summer. By the by, Bridgeport people ought to enjoy themselves in summer, judging from all the yachts and pleasure boats we saw dancing in their sleep on the water.

After Stratford (a most lovable old town, of charming gray-shingle houses, which, to escape loneliness, crowded close to the edge of the elm-shaded road) we crossed the Housatonic. The shores stretched away into mystery, so broad was the river; and the moment we were out of a town, in the country, the scene was like a dream of Indian days, just interrupted by waking now and then at sight of some houses grouped round a common. There was Milford, for instance, which looked as if nothing could happen in its pretty peacefulness, yet it was the hiding-place of a regicide judge who ran away to America after the head of Charles the First was off!

At New Haven, the "City of Elms," we could have turned toward Boston along a fine road by way of Springfield, but we preferred to keep to the charming coast road, and it goes without saying that we stopped to prowl about among the college buildings; also we lunched. "A

village of learning and light" the place is called, but of course its village days are outgrown, though the learning and light will remain forever, while Yale lasts. Washington reviewed the Yale students on the Green, which is the historic centre of New Haven, just as the college is its ever-pulsing heart. (I wonder if the dear boys had already invented that lovely Yale yell, and gave it in Washington's honour?) Benedict Arnold helped also to write the romance of the Green by drawing up his company there. The great elms which look down on it now must have seen him and perhaps read his treacherous mind, for they say the elms of New Haven are the most intelligent and learned anywhere in New England except at Harvard itself; and you know that knot-holes are trees' eyes. They don't tell this to any one save their most intimate friends, but Jack and I know tree language. At home in the park we put our ears against their trunks and listen in the spring, when they are most talkative and don't mind telling their best secrets.

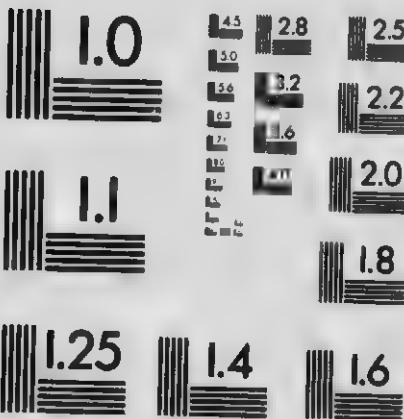
The brown and red Yale buildings, restful and interesting, Jack and I loved, and we insisted on lingering to look at them, though every one was impatient with us except Pat, Peter, and the three dear bareheaded Boys. Peter thought the beautiful white library and its surroundings "like a vista of Washington seen through a diminishing glass"; so evidently he has been to Washington in his mysterious past!

If some of us hadn't suffered from motoritis and speeditis rather badly we should have pottered about half the day, but ours is a hard procession to manage. Besides, Ed Caspian hates to have Pat interested in things, because



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then he's obliged to get out and look at them with her, or risk her in Peter's society. This danger he runs only when he can't run himself. He is so proud of his well-shaped feet that he has his boots made too small, and if the weather is warm it's a real penance for him to walk far. There's really something *pathetic* about this, or would be were Caspian only a little less bumptious than he is, for if gossip tells the truth, the millionaire of to-day was once one of those sterling socialists who began their career to fame walking the king's highway with bare feet and their spare clothes tied up in their one handkerchief. (How awkward if they had a cold in the head!)

After all the fuss he made about "wasted time," we arrived early at New London, where we planned to spend the night. Something happened there, but I haven't come to that yet. First, I must tell you just a little about the dazzling beauty of the way! I should like to tell you a lot, and force you to stop at every place en route. Easthaven, with trees and a church steeple which almost succeed in reaching heaven; Branford, where Yale College was founded, and where there are the very nicest seventeenth century houses you ever saw—*fighting* houses with overhanging upper stories where you could look down through holes in the floor and pot at Indians trying to break in; Guilford, prettiest of all the villages on Jack's list of places where he'd like to live (we almost envied Fitz Greene Halleck, the poet, for being born there); Clinton, with its parklike common which reminded us of the Lichtenthal Allée at Baden-Baden; old Saybrook, worthy of its name, and thrilling for its antique shops; old Lyme, the haunt of artists, glimmering white in a

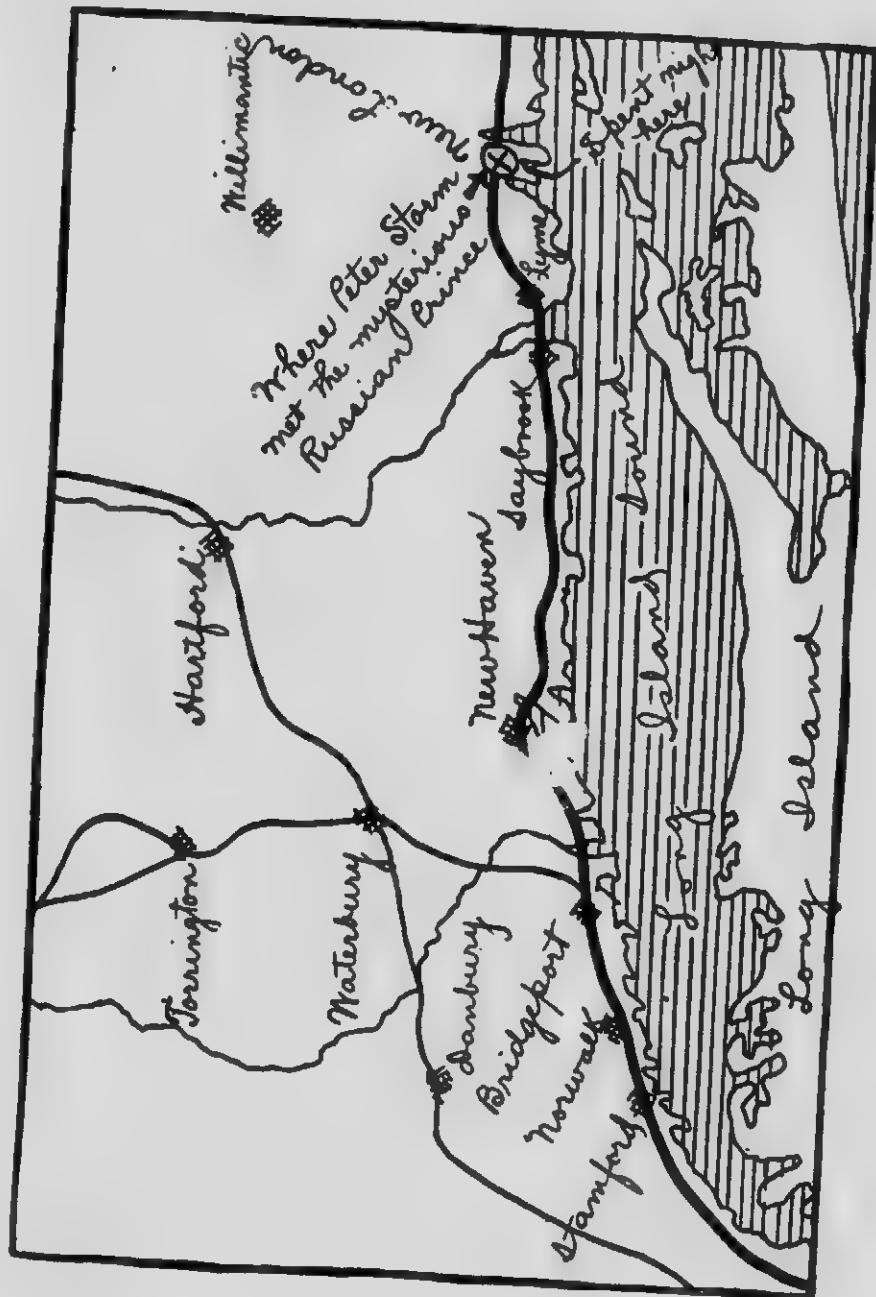
grove of elms; Flanders village—East Lyme—where all the flowers on earth were jumbled sweetly together like happy families in every garden. But if I did delay you thus, your poor mind would become like one of these jumbled gardens, full of sweet things impossible to sort. Mine is like that already; but, after all, it doesn't matter so much for me, because Jack has promised to bring me this way once again before we go back home. Then, if I've mixed one village with another in a kind of mental earthquake, I can rearrange my *tout ensemble*. Impressions of the country, however, I shall never lose or blur disastrously with those of any other part: it is too individual, and makes too clear a picture.

Much of our way was like a private park bigger than any king or emperor in Europe ever owned. Then, after miles of trees with blue, misty vistas hanging between, like painted gauze curtains, we flashed suddenly out to open spaces purple-red with fireweed, and vast, flat stretches of tawny marshland swept with tides of colour, rainbow streaks of amethyst and rose-topaz. The Sound was within sight and smell. Salt perfume of ocean mingled with spicy fragrance from the sunburnt bayberry flung in thick ruglike masses upon bare gray rock, and azure veinings of the sea, stray among the marshes, made strong-growing water plants give out a tang that was tonic to our nostrils.

You may think that such a picture could be sketched in colour along the coastline of almost any country, but if so, you will be mistaken, for all this as we saw it was extraordinarily individual and *American*. Why, exactly, I can't define, but you will understand, if Monty doesn't.

Though you say you haven't been much in New England you know what the soul of America is. Well, this soul, whose first (remembered) spark came from the Indians, was brightened to living fire by the Puritans from over the sea who called the world they found New England. Somehow, the combination is unique, and the same curious sense of personality runs through everything, linking all together as a golden thread might link many different coloured beads. The cedars crowning the hills could be only American cedars. "Joe Pye weed" (whose Indian name is lost, but whose pinky purple colour is ever present) is so patriotic a plant that it would perish rather than grow in foreign parts. The ponds crusted with water-lily pads and ringed round with young trees like children dancing hand in hand seem to sing "We are of New England!" And even the apple trees—immense domed tents of green and pink brocade—are like colonial ladies dressed in their hoop-skirted best.

New London, on the contrary—when we came to it at last—struck us as being like some town of England, or of Scotland. That was only a first impression, however, and a superficial likeness. We soon began to find out the differences, for New London was our night stop, and we had hours before dark to criticise and admire. It hadn't been a long run, as runs go, from New York, and at New Haven we heard motor fiends at luncheon near us in the hotel talk of "pushing on to Boston." Just such a fiend would Caspian be if he could, because he so hates the stops devoted to sight-seeing; but Jack and Peter are, after all, powers behind the throne, or, rather, behind the engines. They don't drive, yet unostentatiously they





direct less determined or less firmly concentrated minds. Nobody except your Molly realized that we were to spend an afternoon and night at New London because Jack Winston and Peter Storm wished it, but so, indeed, it was. Nobody but your Molly guessed that a sight-seeing plot was hatching against Caspian and—incidentally—against Mrs. Shuster. Idonia Goodrich had been carefully incited to keen interest in New London because of the Yale and Harvard boat races, and though nothing was going on, she wanted to see the place where such things *did* go on. Where Idonia goes, the fickle Larry likes to go just now, for when a good-looking girl flags him with the signal, "I'm ready to flirt if you are!" he simply can't resist, which means that where Idonia and Larry go, thither goeth Lily also. As for Pat, she knows that actively seeing sights is her one hope (if any) of escape from Caspian. Consequently she had listened with almost unnatural interest to Jack's talk, before starting, of the principal "features" to be sought out at our first night's stopping place.

Were it not for Caspian's feet, I'm afraid dear Pat wouldn't have cared a whalebone to go and stare at the harbour because New London had been a big whaling centre. She wouldn't have bothered with John Winthrop's historic mill, which has never been out of use from his day to ours. She wouldn't have rushed from Nathan Hale's schoolhouse to gape at the Perkins Mansion, where Washington and Lafayette stayed; or if she had she would have consented to go in the car. As it was, however, that girl's energy was frenzied, and her exertions were rewarded at last by the dropping out of Caspian from her train. He limped back to the hotel,

furious, leaving Pat with me and Jack, Peter, Tom, Dick, and Harry.

Pat was a new person when she had shed him, and we ended up our excursion with a wild, weird "movie." It *was* fun! I never laughed so much; and Peter Storm was like a boy. A cloud fell upon us, however, and damped our spirits as we returned to the hotel to dress for dinner. We knew that Caspian would be in the sulks, and that somehow Pat would be made to pay for her pleasure.

There he sat in the big hall, where he could see us as we filed guiltily in, very late. As a protest, he was already dressed, and looked like one of those neat little sugar men with yellow hair, red lips, and black coat that you see on lower middle-class wedding cakes. He held a book in his hand, but had been talking, or trying to talk, to a big, dark, handsome man who lolled in a neighbouring chair. In a flashing glance we gained the impression that the big fellow was bored by Caspian and had sought refuge from him behind a newspaper. But at sight of us Caspian hastily stiffened into an attitude of martyred waiting, and at the same instant the tall man jumped up with a queer exclamation. His paper dropped. He looked as if he saw a ghost, and—that ghost was Peter Storm!

"Mon Dieu!" or words to that effect I saw, rather than heard, him say. Then Peter got to him in two or three gigantic strides, as if in seven-leagued boots, and thrust his face close to that other astonished face. What Peter said I could not catch, because he spoke in whisper and very fast. What the big man (bigger than Peter) said in return could not have been caught by the ear of a fox, for he said nothing at all—except with his eyes.

They, at first, expressed something like horror. Then they softened, or dulled, I couldn't tell which, and suddenly it occurred to me to flash a glance to Caspian. He was almost ill with curiosity. Pat had turned to stare at him, too, knowing already, through the bitter experience which had made him her fiancé, that C. wanted only a weapon with which to do Peter harm.

Certainly it did look as if Peter were desperately anxious to choke the man into silence. He had the air of wanting to stop some irrevocable word from being said, of urging, explaining, almost entreating. "What can it mean?" I asked myself, determined, however, to keep my faith in the Stormy Petrel at any price.

As I thought of all sorts of things, I heard Pat say, "I'm not going to dress. It's too late, and I'm too tired. I'll go in to dinner just as I am, if you will, Molly."

Instantly I guessed what was in her mind. The bright child was rallying round Peter. If I hadn't been sure before that she'd fallen in love with him, I should have been sure then! It was love that made her think quickly and find the best way to defend him—as she had found a way before, by sacrificing herself. She knew that, if he were left alone, Ed Caspian would try to get hold of the stranger (whom he evidently knew) the instant Peter and he parted. He would pump him if possible, and Peter's secret, whatever it was, would be at the enemy's mercy.

I rose to the occasion, or, rather, I sat down on it. I subsided into the chair close to Caspian which the man had jumped up from like a Jack-in-a-box. Pat followed my example by plumping into a seat on Ed's other side,

and in common decency he could not bolt. "Why, yes," I said, "I should like nothing better than an excuse to dine as I am. Mr. Caspian is so smart, he must bear off the honours for us all."

Jack, of course, saw what we were up to, for he had seen the whole drama—tragedy, comedy, whatever it was! British though he is, it never takes him longer than a lightning (conductor) flash to seize any situation in which I am concerned. But I don't need to tell you that! You, too, have married a Britisher, and know just how much that dear old American joke about English slowness of comprehension amounts to—unless the creature is putting on airs!

"We'll none of us dress," said he, with a wicked gleam in his eye; the Boys joined him; and the dapper wedding-cake figure was surrounded and swallowed up by a wave of untidy tourists. We didn't leave him alone for a minute, until Peter Storm and the stranger were seen returning from their confab, and going toward the restaurant door *together*, without a backward glance for us.

Things were thus safe for the time being. I announced that I was rested, and would like to dine at once. Pat said that she was famished! We went to dinner therefore—picture it!—without even washing our hands.

Peter and the stranger sat at a little table at the farthest corner of the room. Caspian looked ready to burst with rage at being "circumvented," and to sink into the floor with shame of his unsuitably clad companions. As for me, I smiled at Jack a sardonic smile which would have made a grand "close up" in the "movie" we had just seen. The most experienced villain couldn't have improved on it.

"Say, who is that chap feeding over there with Storm?" inquired the innocent Tom.

"The ' ' said Caspian, ' is the military attaché of the Russian Embassy in Washington. He is here on business. His name is Captain Ipanoff. He is also a Prince."

His being "also a Prince" explained to me why Ed, our prize snob, should have tried to lure him from his newspaper with honeyed conversation. But it didn't explain why his eyes should start out of his head at sight of Peter Storm.

Up to date, the thing hasn't been explained; for now, as I write to you, it is the same night, and so far as I know, P. S. and his Prince are still together. I don't want—at least, I don't *want* to want—to know anything about Peter Storm that he doesn't wish known. But Ed Caspian will know if possible. I do wonder what the mystery can be, don't you? I shall write again almost at once, whether I have any more to tell on this subject or not. I can't stop long in the middle of the secret—I mean the trip!

Your very affectionate

MOLLY.

P. S. Jack says curiosity is a misunderstood virtue. Without it the world would not have progressed. He's forgotten Pandora. But no, perhaps not. Hope was at the bottom of her box, and we should have missed it if she hadn't let the winged Troubles out.

## XIX

PATRICIA MOORE TO ADRIENNE DE MONCOURT

*Moon Pond,  
Newport, R. I.*

MIGNONNE:

I have found waiting here a letter from my Adrienne. It has been forwarded from Kidd's Pines. What can have happened to this poor letter I do not know, but it has been a long time on the way. I see it is written just after the last one, which I have had—it is two weeks now; so it brings me not much of news except that you like the American cousin more even than before, and a crisis draws near. All my love and good wishes go to you, chérie. Already it must be that things are settling themselves for you and your Marcel (I am sure he *is* your Marcel!), and the wishes will arrive late. Perhaps you will send me a cable; and it may come at any time, for you will be at home with dear Madame your mother and not with the Sisters. But I shall not really *expect* the message by telegram, for in France one does not send cables as one does in America. One thinks twice. It is an important decision to take.

As for me, all remains as when I wrote you last. I thought at first that I could not go on being engaged, but would have to break. Now I find it too difficult to do this, though I have not saved my poor Larry from his sacrifice. He bears up well, but that is because we are

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*en automobile, and there are changes of scene, and nice people to make him forget. He is wonderful about forgetting, but I fear he may collapse when by and by he must look reality in the face. It is not always a pretty face!*

I sometimes forget, too, for a while, but it is more difficult, for a girl cannot choose her own companions as a man can. I lie awake at night thinking of the future, because if I am to help Larry in a big, useful way I must marry—not just go on being engaged. Much money is to be settled on me, and I will give all to Larry. I feel as if I should not like to take any for myself. You and I used to say we should not let ourselves be married off to men we could not love, as so many of the old girls at school have done. But circumstances will be very strong. With me, there are complications. It will not be fair to dear Larry to speak of them. I do not see how they can arrange themselves without my marrying. Still, I try to think of the present and not of the future. I have this tour before me. It is not perfect, but at least I cannot be a *Mrs.* till it is over!

Here at Newport we visit friends of Larry's, all of us except the nice Tom, Dick, and Harry I told you of; a Senator Collinge, Mrs. Shuster's friend; the Goodrich family, who are so large and handsome, and a family of two who are a bride and bridegroom, and Mr. Storm. He is not at Newport at all, though the others who are not at Moon Pond stay in a pretty little hotel almost like a private house. It seems odd, they do not have big hotels in this wonderful place. The rich people who have made the new part so wonderful do not like to have tourists come and stay if they can help it. They want

Newport to belong to them, and so it does, except the old town, which Molly Winston and her husband and I like best of all.

Do you not think "Moon Pond" a fascinating name for a place? The pond is in the garden of these friends where we spend two days and nights; and in front of the large lawn, with its great clumps of blue hydrangea, rolls the Atlantic Ocean. It *would* be lovely to stay here, for it is a beautiful place (a very big house built of gray shingles, soft gray like the feathers on a mother bird's breast, and not looking too big in a showy way, because it is rambling, with many verandas and unexpected nooks), but they *will* give us a dinner in celebration of being engaged. That spoils everything. I am glad Mr. Storm will not be at the dinner. I should not like to see his eyes. Mr. Caspian is not nice to him, but he is better than at first, because I was very angry at some things he did. I said I would not be engaged to a man who could be rude to another poorer in money than himself.

Yes, I think Peter Storm must be *very* poor in money, or he would not go on in this situation with Mrs. Shuster, who has Mr. Caspian for one of her best friends, yet lets him behave as he likes to her secretary. Mr. Storm is a proud man and of a high temper. One can see that when his eyes look like topaz fire, and his face turns red. Yet he shuts his mouth and makes fists of his hands, and says nothing instead of hitting or answering back. I am so sorry for him! He is the most interesting man you could meet. But I suppose you never will meet, for he will be gone out of my life long before you and I see each other once more—if we ever do.

He does not like to be in a fashionable place, and Newport is perhaps the most fashionable in this country. He came with us for the tour, as far as New London, a big, nice town which has a river called the Thames, like real London. Then he met a man he knew, and said he would join us again after Newport, at Fall River, on the way to Boston, which will be our next stop. The friend he met was rather mysterious. Or no, the way of meeting was mysterious. It was a great surprise to them both, and Mr. Storm took the man—a Russian Prince—off to a distance and never let him come near us for a minute. Mr. Caspian knew the Prince to speak to, and he would have asked him about Mr. Storm if he could, but Molly Winston and I would not let him. If Mr. Storm has something he wishes to keep a secret, it is his affair. But there is one thing I worry about a little. I do not see why I may not tell you *that!*

Before I made my promise to him, Mr. Caspian was so silly as to be jealous of Mr. Storm. He thought, like all of us, that there was some mystery, but unlike us, he believed it was a *bad* one. He wished to do Mr. Storm some harm. He even threatened to hire a detective to watch always what he did. But after we were engaged Mr. Caspian did not feel the same. I suppose he said to himself that he was more safe. He did not want Mr. Storm to go away, because he enjoyed being a tyrant to him, and showing his power over me.

It was like that till New London. I was rather silly there, I am afraid, but I was so tired of being with Mr. Caspian every minute. He seems to squeeze out my vitality like water from a sponge! I took a revenge by

making *him* tired—in his feet, not his head. We all left him to go home and rest and be very cross while we enjoyed ourselves. But it is not me he would punish for that. It is poor Peter Storm! He begins to be jealous again as before, and I am afraid he may do the horrid thing he has threatened to do. A word he dropped made me think of it. I wish I could give Mr. Storm some hint to be careful. But even when I see him again (it won't be till day after to-morrow) I shall not dare. Perhaps I can get Molly to speak.

I can't help missing Mr. Storm when we go about seeing beautiful things. I told you long ago I liked seeing things with him. But I keep with Molly and Jack Winston as much as I can when we are out of doors, here at Newport. Larry's friends are very good. They let us go about as we like and come in when we like. Now that Mr. Storm is away, Mr. Caspian does not worry to be with me every minute. He knows some fearfully rich people at Newport. It is strange, isn't it, that he likes rich people much better than poor (except Larry and me), though he used to be a socialist and give lectures against capital? Peter Storm says that to be a *true* socialist is the finest thing in the world, and can save the world from itself; but I do not think Mr. Caspian can have been that kind, as he does not even like to talk of socialism now.

His friends here, the Hodges, live in a house which Jack Winston says could swallow up and digest Buckingham Palace. He has made me meet them, and they are very pleasant, but not so restful as the Langworthys, where we stay. When the Hodges find I want to see sights, they are surprised and laugh. It is not the fashion

with people who live at Newport to see sights. They have seen everything in the whole world, and care only for seeing each other—the ones they know. Nobody else is worth knowing. Mr. Caspian tries to be like that, but it seems an imitation. With the real ones it is true, and not for effect.

It seems that our family must be very old, because everybody, even these grandest ones, are kind to us, and think it is great fun that we keep a hotel. Molly and Jack they like of course, because M. and J. are "great swells."

Now, chérie, I must stop, and go for a walk with them. Molly calls it a "potter." But you will not know what that word means!

A hundred wishes and loves! Your

PATRICE.

XX

NIGHT LETTER TELEGRAM FROM PETER  
STORM TO JAMES STRICKLAND

*New London.*

Just missed getting into scrape here. Saved by presence of mind. You have heard me speak of Ipanoff. Met him accidentally. He has relatives seeing America, awaiting them New London; found me instead. Shall stay to-morrow, letting my party go on. Meet Fall River by train. Couldn't stand Newport. Writing you on business.

P. S.

## XXI

### MOLLY WINSTON TO MERCEDES LANE

*A Gorgeous Hotel in dear old Boston.*

BEST MERCEDES:

I am thrilled with New England! It has got into my blood, which is of the south. Why do we—you and I and the rest of us—dash over to Europe before we're old enough to see much of and appreciate our own country? Still, I'm thankful we did, or we shouldn't have met Jack or Monty.

Are you tired of travelling with me and my Lightning Conductor? You said you couldn't, wouldn't, shouldn't be; so if you've changed your mind, you've brought this on yourself.

I didn't quite realize, even with my first warm glow of admiration, all that New England meant, in a *concrete* way. I realized the beauty, the individual charm, the historic interest, but now I'm beginning to put them together in a bouquet where one flower sets off another. Oh, dear, I wish that not *quite* so many things had happened before our day! It would have been easier to sort them about a hundred and fifty years ago. Yet, a hundred and fifty years ago there wouldn't have been an Emerson, a Thoreau, a Hawthorne, a Longfellow, a Whittier, a Bryant, a Lowell, or an Oliver Wendell Holmes, to say nothing of half a dozen others I'm too excited to recall

at the moment. It would have been sad to come here before they lived and embroidered the tapestry of life with their lovely thoughts—almost the difference between travelling on a gray day and in clear sunshine. For New England belongs to these philosophers and poets just as much as it belongs to the Indians and Puritans and Soldiers of the Revolution.

Now you see what my mood is! I think Jack has inspired it, for he can quote most of the New England writers, if not by the yard at least by the inch. He says he used to learn their wit and wisdom to repeat "at his mother's knee." I shouldn't have supposed Lady Brightelmston's knee capable of it; but one never knows!

The last time I wrote you was at New London. I posted the letter at Groton, I remember, because I was thinking so hard of "The Peter Storm Mystery" that everything else went out of my head. My dear, *he stayed behind*, with his Russian friend, leaving Pat to the mercy of Caspian!

You have to cross by ferry to get to Groton—old Fort Griswold—and the New London side is too amusing. Practically all the boy population of America seemed to be there to see us off. They had come on purpose to tell motorists what to do and whither to proceed, thus extracting dimes in gratitude or blackmail. Good gracious! If we tried to do half the things they advised, nay, insisted on, we'd be as busy as bees the rest of our lives or else go mad! I can tell you we were thankful to escape on to the charming, peaceful road we found after the ferry had shed us on the other side. Soon we turned off on to a rough

short cut; but it was fascinating, too, and would have been like scenery on the Crinan Canal if it hadn't been still more like itself. The hydrangeas growing in the gardens were marvellous, great trees of them, with different shaped flowers from ordinary human hydrangeas, flowers like huge bunches of white grapes seen from a distance. The flat blue and pink kind prefer to grow close by the shore. There was another darling tree—one on every lawn nearly —Rose of Sharon. Do you know it? The name alone makes Jack glad he came to America. And then, the colour of the marshes!—crimson and orange-gold, with streaks of emerald. Where there weren't marshes, the meadows were white with Queen Anne's lace. She must have sent a lot of it to America! Tiger lilies grew wild, dazzling colonies of them, and from gray rocks ferns spurted and showered. Isn't it charming that a river called the Mystic should run, or, rather, gently dawdle, through a world like this? Its mother is the Sound; and perhaps because it's very historic, it justified its dignity by leading us out of this flowery fairyland, past stern, faded farmhouses to a wide country of rolling downs, bathed in silver light—downs whose sides were spread with forests like dark tracts of shadow.

We passed through Westerly of the granite quarries, and suddenly we realized that we were in Rhode Island. Don't you like the name "Watch Hill"? I do. And I liked the place, which "summer people" love. But all the neighbourhood is enchanting. It doesn't matter *where* you stay! I never saw so many flowers, wild and tame: tame hydrangeas, wild grapes, wild spirea and bayberry, half-tamed, worried-looking sunflowers, with so much sun they

don't know which way to turn. All this within sight of the Sound, with islands and necks of blue-green land like a door ajar to the ocean.

It was a fine drive, after Wakefield, along the Narragansett front, the most countrylike road imaginable, with wild shrubbery on either side, and then the most ultra-civilized hotels, an army of them on parade, with the sea for their drill sergeant.

At Saunderstown we took ferry for Newport—a double ferry, but neither journey was long. A mist floated over the water like the ghost of the Queen Anne lace we had passed; but we had glimpses of Fort Greble and Fort Adams. Oh, there's *heaps* to see at Newport besides the haunts of the Four Hundred! We landed at last in a dear old town with quaint but rich-looking houses of retired sea captains and other comfortable folk who simply don't exist for the eyes of Society, though they no doubt have a background crowded with brave ancestors. Jack and I meant to stop at a nice little hotel which exists apologetically; but friends of Larry's insisted on our staying with them. We should have thought up some excuse to refuse (not that we'd *fib*: but it's fair to economize truth at times!) if Pat hadn't begged us to accept. You see, Ed Caspian was invited as her fiancé, and Mrs. Shuster as Larry's, and there was to be a dinner in honour of the two couples. The poor child, a lamb led to the slaughter, seemed to think that the altar of sacrifice would be more tolerable if we were present to scatter rosemary and rue upon it. We consented, of course. But I felt quite hard toward Peter Storm, who had, in a way, been appointed by Jack and himself as her unofficial guardian in the

Grayles-Grice, and had apparently failed her by stopping behind with his Russian.

We were able to relieve the strain a little by taking the girl out for walks in the old town, a part of Newport most interesting to us, least interesting to Caspian. Dear Father brought me once to Newport to visit people in a house which called itself a cottage and looked like a castle, but that was when I was seventeen, in a summer holiday in the midst of school life. I had the intense ambition of a flapper to be a *débutante*; and because I envied girls who were "out" I did all I could to usurp their prerogatives by flirting and "dressing up." I didn't care a rap for anything or anybody over thirty. The Casino, the Yacht Club, Bellevue Avenue for shopping or driving, Bailey's Beach, that haven for any modern Venus to rise from the foam if she has a lovely bathing dress, the twelve-mile Ocean Drive in all its luxury and millionairish beauty—these represented Newport for me; and I bet they'd have meant the same for you in your salad days! They're still great fun, and perfectly delightful and almost unique, it is true, but now I feel, with Jack, the "call of the past." The Old Stone Mill, with its contradictory histories, is more fascinating than the Casino. I could get quite hot and angry arguing with any one who disputes the fact—*fact*, I say!—that this extraordinary gray-stone tower draped with creepers and backed with trees is the memorial of a Viking's wife. Longfellow's "The Skeleton in Armour" was one of those poems which Lady Brighelmston's knee taught to Jack. "Speak, speak, thou fearful guest!" I had forgotten, I'm ashamed to say, but Jack has reminded me about the figure in "rude armour drest" which appeared

when they took away a wall. I just won't have my Viking Tower torn out of the eleventh century and stuck into the seventeenth. So there! I don't see why it isn't right to believe the nicest things in the past of a country instead of the worst, as you must do with a woman, if you're not a cat!

Pat and I are going to read Fenimore Cooper's "Red Rover" because the scenes are laid in this neighbourhood; at least I am going to read it, and Pat will if Caspian gives her a chance to do anything intelligent in future. He won't if he can help it, I'm sure! You ought to have seen the boiled codfish look in his eyes when Pat, arriving at Moon Pond after an excursion with us, tried to entertain him by talking of Matthew Perry building the first steam vessel in the American Navy and arranging a treaty that opened the door of Japan to the west! There's a monument to him in the park, and we'd been looking at it.

Well, in spite of Fate, I think the child enjoyed her Newport days, if not her Newport evenings, and indeed, she seemed to have the feeling that they were snatched from the jaws of the said ruthless lady. We mooned about among the entirely charming and more or less famous houses, in what ought to be called Oldport, a very, very important place for more than a hundred years before a tidal wave of fashion swept over it about the middle of the eighteenth century: great families coming in their own schooners, with their servants and horses, from Charleston and Savannah. You can't think of the exciting, historic things we found out in our "moonings": history on the sea, even before Captain Kidd's privateers were being chased along the shore, for Rhode Island al-

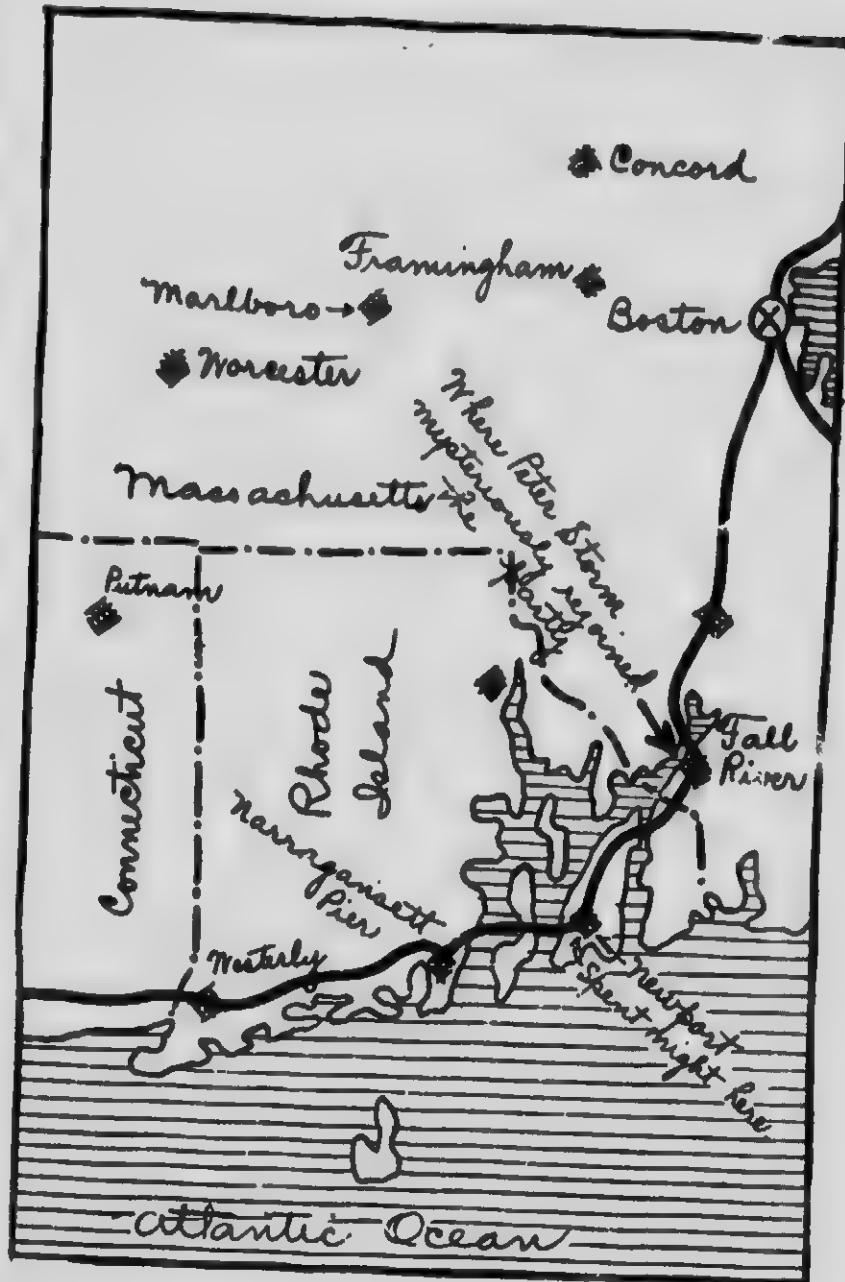
ways "loved to fight if she could fight on the sea"; history on land, from the time that the inhabitants were abandoning their houses in fear of Sir Henry Clinton and the British fleet, up to these brilliant days of Astors and Belmonts and Vanderbilts. Jack and I got so resigned to visiting Larry's pleasant friends that we should have been sorry to leave if it hadn't been for our curiosity to see "what would happen next" in the Peter affair.

The last thing we did was to get up with the sun and start out for an excursion to the Forty Steps. But, after all, Jack was too lame to manage them. He was very cut up, but his sense of humour came to the rescue as usual, and he was showing a brave face again when we started off in the motor once more, for Fall River—and beyond. Then, if not before, we should have realized what a marvellous frame Newport has. I suppose in some ways no other spot is equal to it. Even Jack says that, and there are few of the great show places of the world he hasn't seen. As a send-off, we gave ourselves a detour and said good-bye to the Ocean Drive. The fleet, which had been visiting for several days, was steaming off to sea. We looked across walls of blue hydrangeas and "rosa rugosa" hung with berries like lumps of coral, out to the gray ships speeding fast through cataracts of sapphire spray. It was a wonderful sight and a wonderful day! The morning sun seemed to paint the rocks purple and turn the high spurting surf to fountains of diamonds. It lit the young gold of maple trees, and the delicate crysophase green of weeping beeches that sweep the lawns along the twelve-mile drive (consoled N. by his weeping only happy tears!) and threw ladders of light down to the

marshes. You will think I am always writing you about marshes. But these are super-marshes. If there are marshes by the Sea of Glass they must be like these. They are so full of faded rainbows that their colour seems to drain into the crystal veins of water which wind into them from inlets of the sea, and turn the crystal into deep-dyed amethysts.

As we went on along the shore, the tiny waves ruffled under our eyes like frills of lace on a baby's baptismal dress. The sea became a wide river with dreamland visioned on the other side. Oh, what a contrast to all the beauty of the "Peaceful Isle" and its surroundings to dash into Fall River! Here and there is a house, or a charming name of a street, to tell that it was once a pleasant old village like other New England villages, but Commerce has sacked it of all that is beautiful—or, if it has left anything by mistake, we didn't see it. The ugly, work-marred town smote us like a blow in the face, and yet we saw that it has its own fierce, flaunting interest. I shall never again think of a Fall River boat as a restful thing. A Fall River boat was all I knew of Fall River before, except that a big Revolutionary battle was fought there. Now a battle between Labour and Capital is ceaselessly going on. It was a joy—a selfish joy, perhaps—to spin out of the town limits and come into Devonshire. Really, it *was* Devonshire—Devonshire in look and in the names of places. What of Taunton, for instance? So we flew on to Boston, through a series of exquisite parks such as surely no other city in the world can have for a frame.

There was just one attractive feature about Fall River





for us: not the Picture Palaces, of which there must be about a million; not the coloured posters of the Azores, put up to please the homesick Portuguese labourers, but the reappearance of Peter Storm. Frankly, dearest, I had been afraid in my inmost heart that the Mystery was going to close round Peter like a dark cloud, hiding him from our sight forever. Caspian had perhaps hoped that this might be the case. But Peter had said that he would be found standing at the corner of Elm Street (there wasn't an elm in it, or any other tree), and there he was, though we were early at the rendezvous rather than late.

I forgot to tell you that Pat started out from Newport in our car, the bride and bridegroom squeezing into the Grayles-Grice. I'd accused the girl of not looking well—a stupidity of which I should never be capable if I hadn't an object to gain—and she had owned to a slight headache. I said that I had some wonderful pillules that I could give her; but I must administer them myself, and they must be taken every half-hour. Of course there was nothing for it but she must come to us; and she brightened visibly with every mile, though whether owing to the pillules or the increasing nearness of Fall River, I can't say, and wouldn't if I could.

Having disposed of the honeymooners, there was room in our car for Peter. Jack and I had manœuvred (by taking a short cut Jack found on a map) to reach Elm Street first; so we did a sort of Sabine business reversed: snatched up Peter and dashed on. I could almost hear Ed Caspian gnashing his teeth in the G.-G. just behind. It was a sound like something wrong with the gear.

Boston you perhaps know more about than I do, at

any rate from books. But you would like to see Jack here—and Monty with him, of course: two wounded heroes enjoying a well-earned repose, as many a wounded hero has enjoyed in other days. He—Jack—wonders if the famous Tea is lying at the bottom of the harbour still, in hermetically sealed tins, and whether it improves with age.

I broke it to you with the top of my letter that we're in a perfectly gorgeous hotel. Jack and I have a suite which would be good enough for a king and queen. He was determined that we'd "do ourselves well," as we are to stay several days, running out to Plymouth and so on, and running back. We've been here now only one night and a morning, but already our sitting-room looks, in some ways, as if we'd taken it for life. Flowers, of course! Jack always buys me flowers; and books—books—books: Longfellow, Hawthorne, Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and some glorified guides in volume form. I said, "Are we to carry all these in the car? We shall be boiling over with books, swamped with books, buried under books as Tarpeia was under the shields and bracelets!" But Jack had made his plans. They will be sent home to Awepesha by the hotel people when we go, and we are to have the comfort of them here. As nobody else will have any books, they'll offer Pat an excuse to drop in on us—Peter, too. Jack ought to give "penny readings," I think!

I haven't, by the way, got any satisfaction out of Peter. We are partners in the Caspian-Shuster plot, but *his* plot he keeps to himself. I wonder what, from all I have told you, Mercédes, you think of him?

In spite of everything, Jack and I believe that he's *all*

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right, and vaguely we look for a Great Surprise, though of what nature we cannot say. I wish it would come before we get into Aunt Mary-land. I begin to need something to brace me up!

Love! Ever your

MOLLY.

## XXII

### MOLLY WINSTON TO MERCEDES LANE

*Still Boston.*

DEAR ONE:

I was wishing for a surprise, and it came. But it hasn't explained anything. It has only thickened the plot—thickened it like porridge made of Boston beans.

I didn't mean to inflict another letter upon you quite so soon; but I'm so full of the surprise—and "beans," too—heavenly Boston ones, very brown, and crisp on top—that I can't wait.

My last night's budget was posted to you only this morning early, when Jack and I were going out to discover what every (other) man and woman knows about the Hub of the Universe. All day long we were so busy seeing and doing things in this delightful, intimate personality that I lost my Stormy Petrel emotion in a crowd of other emotions. Usually when we stop anywhere, and are not in the car most of the day, Mrs. Shuster finds work for Peter to do. She and ex-Senator Collinge give him sheafs of notes to elaborate into letters or articles for the papers which propagate their ideas. I think—and have thought from the first—that this plan of campaign is more to please the Ally (Caspian) than from any pressing need for such work to be done *en route*. Mrs. Shuster impulsively engaged Storm before Caspian met him, and very likely

made some sort of contract to which he can hold her if he chooses. Besides, she admires him as much as ever, though she admires Larry more, and in her silly, blundering way, she plays a double game. All sweetness and light to Storm when she's with him, and immense pride in him as an employé—the pride a small, dull comet might feel in attracting attention to itself by trailing a disproportionately brilliant tail across the sky. All specious promises and excuses to Caspian when she's with him and *not* with Peter. Caspian, you remember, used to be a protégé of hers when he was a rising young socialist, and she was the widow of a quaint genius who'd made a fortune in some weird patent to keep your hair from decaying, or your teeth from falling out. Now, he's a rising young millionaire, accepted by People Who Matter; and he can do more for her than she for him, socially. So she has to be nice to him, no matter how she feels, and "keep him sweet," anyhow until she's quite sure of Larry and his ancestors to back her up. That's the way I account for Peter's being kept on, though of course there's the fact that Caspian enjoys bullying him now that he's down.

Anyhow, that's the situation on the surface. When we motor, the Stormy Petrel submits himself for the present to the boot of the tyrant in the Grayles-Grice. When we leave the motor, Peter is left, too, and chained to his duties. But, so long as he gets through his tasks at the appointed time, no questions can be asked as to how he spends the extra hours. And the speed with which he does get through those tasks is miraculous as that of Psyche sorting the grains of wheat at the order of mother-in-law Venus! Psyche had all the kingdom of ants to help her.

But *who* helps Peter? One can't suppose that he's rich enough to fling all his salary to an understudy while he gads. Yet I've seen him going to his room with a *sheaf* of papers which would keep the nose of a common secretary at the grindstone for six or seven hours, whereas P. S. is free to do as he pleases in less than half that time.

This long preamble explains why Peter Storm didn't start out with us this morning, though we picked him up at Fall River and brought him on to Boston, as I told you, and why he was nevertheless able to appear casually in Cambridge. We came across him in the college yard, just as we were "processing" through the big gateway, guided by the Boys, proud, happy Boys, showing off their Alma Mater to their Best Girl and her satellites!

"If I'd had an education, here's where I should like to have got it," Peter remarked, calmly joining our forces, unabashed by Caspian's stare.

"You haven't finished all that stuff the Senator and I gave you!" gasped Lily, knowing that the eye of Ed had travelled reproachfully to her.

"That's all right, Mrs. Shuster," was Peter's airy reply. "When you get home, you'll find that everything has been duly posted."

There was nothing more to be said on the subject. And though Peter referred to himself as a person of no education, he seemed to know more about Cambridge than the Boys themselves—quite as much as Jack, who has been studying up the place as if for an exam!

It really is charming, that college yard, you know, Mercedes—just as charming in its way, Jack admits, as bits

of Oxford, or the old Cambridge for which this darling place was named. Once it was called Newton, but after the great event in 1636—the granting by the General Court of Massachusetts Bay of *four hundred pounds* “towards a schoole or colledge”—they decided that it ought to be called Cambridge. Nearly all the buildings contrive to look rather venerable (they cloak themselves with creepers), but some, like Massachusetts Hall and Harvard Hall, and several houses, are really old. Tom, Dick, and Harry put on the air of graybeards returning, after a half-century of adventure, to their childhood’s home, though they left college only last year to go abroad. It was funny to see the patronizing looks they cast on the undergrads we saw; but they were the life of the place for us, all the same, and we felt truly *in it*, chaperoned by them. Outside college bounds, however, they lost interest. It was Jack who had to tell us about “Brattle.” As far as the Boys were concerned, it might have been any ordinary street, instead of *the street* of the world, as it is to true hearts of Cambridge. In Cambridge the smart thing is to be rather dowdy, just as it is at Oxford, and in Cambridge of England; and so, as we had got ourselves up to dazzle Boston (a difficult task, I must say!), we were conspicuously, ignominiously tourists as we gazed in reverence at Washington’s Elm, at Longfellow’s exquisite old primrose yellow house, and the other historic incarnations of Cambridge’s past. Only the Boys were not subject to the pitying scorn of Society. They didn’t have on their *worst* clothes, because they have neither best nor worst, but what they had on was *it*. And possessing no hats was greatly in their favour. By the way, did you

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know that Cambridge is the first place where a printing press was set up in America? I didn't. It remained for my English Jack to inform me of the fact.

This Cambridge expedition was in the afternoon I neglected to mention. Our morning (while Peter doubtless toiled) had been spent in the wonderful Public Library of Boston itself. We'd meant to do more and other things, but one could stay a week in that library, which I believe started with just *ten thousand* books! Everything is beautiful about it, from the pale-pink granites and brown Spanish tiles without to the St. Gauden lions who guard the great marble staircase within. Sargent's "Religions of the World" is a noble decoration, and Abbey's frieze of the Holy Grail is beautiful, but the panel paintings of Puvis de Chavannes—"The Muses Greeting the Genius of Enlightenment"—are worth while coming from London or Paris to Boston to see.

After we motored back from Cambridge we wandered about here and there, seeing the "Cradle of American Liberty," the "Sanctuary of Freedom," and the place "where Independence was born." Unless you have the key, you won't be able to unlock this saying, so I'll do it for you. Why, they call Faneuil Hall the "Cradle of Liberty" because they used to hold all the town meetings there to discuss whether they should revolt against British rule or no; so Liberty must have rocked to and fro a lot! The Old South Meeting House is the "Sanctuary of Freedom," for there it was prayed for and blessed. And of course Independence was born in the Old State House. I wonder if anything half as epoch-making will ever come to pass under the great gold dome of the new one? It's

very fine, but it can never be quite so thrilling, I think. And it wasn't built where the pillory and scaffold used to stand! Jack would see the Bunker Hill Monument, too, though I think monuments, even the finest, seem to chill your glorious visions of what really happened on the spot.

Jack, and Pat, and Peter, and I then made a secret pact that we'd devote part of to-morrow to Hawthorne's Boston; that we'd pretend to find the house of "The Blithedale Romance" in Tremont Street; that we'd poke about for the lost site of Hester Prynne's lonely hut on the Back Bay (huts there are neither cheap nor lonely now), and search for various other story landmarks. With this happy prospect before us, and having slyly shaken off all other companions, we went unsuspectingly back to the hotel, not dreaming of a *guet-apens*, as the French so expressively say.

Peter doesn't live at our hotel, not being able to afford gorgeousness. Marble-walled, gilded-ceilinged rotundas and restaurants are not for humble secretaries, alas, even if they do look like banished princes! We invited him, however (also Pat), to have tea with us in our own sitting-room, and he accepted.

If we could, we should have sneaked in; but the magnificent entrance-hall of our palatial hotel is not adapted to sneaking purposes. I'll be hanged if there's a single trap-door under a conveniently placed Persian rug, or so much as a secret sliding panel, unless you count the elevators as such! However, we were doing our best to look invisible *en masse*, when up sprang Edward Caspian and crossed our path as we ought to have expected the villain of the piece to do.

He was not alone. With him was a man, not young, yet not looking middle-aged. He had a head rather like Shakespeare's, and eyes like aquamarines with a light burning behind them.

"Jove!" I heard the Stormy Petrel mutter. "Camera-eyed Dick!"

I knew instantly that Caspian had been as good as his word, and had sent for a detective. The name "Camera-eyed Dick" was too terribly expressive, and so was the way Peter pronounced it, even though he spoke under his breath—to himself, not to me. I felt that here was a man with a fearsome specialty—a man called "camera-eyed," because his eyes photographed on his brain stuff a permanent picture of every face he saw. And Caspian had brought him here, no doubt at large expense, to recognize the face of Peter Storm, alias Some One Else.

Oh, it was an awful moment, and made worse because I felt this stroke was partly our fault. If we hadn't done everything we could to aggravate Caspian and make him more jealous than ever of Storm, just as his jealousy had been simmering down, probably he wouldn't have bothered to carry out his old threat. I thought I should faint, I was so frightened for Peter, and so sick at the idea of having him arrested or something.

"Is there anything I can do?" I stammered out, before I could stop myself from making a bad *faux pas* and showing that I suspected his danger.

Peter (he and I were walking ahead, Jack and Patsey behind) didn't make the faintest pretense of not understanding. He gave me a glance—I wasn't sure whether it was just bold or whether there was a sense of drama in it

## DISCOVERS AMERICA

—and said in a quiet voice: "No, thank you; nothing at all."

The one way of escaping the encounter would have been to run for it, which would, of course, only have made matters worse; so we marched straight on into the jaws of detection. I would have given much to know whether Jack and Pat had heard Peter's exclamation, and if they guessed in the least what a scene we might be in for. (No, not a *scene*! I couldn't, even then, associate Peter with a "scene" in public; despite his temper, he is always so cool in every emergency, and has such a peculiar way of carrying things off!)

Much as I wanted to know, however, I dared not turn. Does a mouse turn to the mice behind it and say, "Here is Mr. Camera-eyed Cat?" No! We walked along, my knees feeling like pats of butter, and presently Ed Caspian and his companion blocked our way, filling the whole horizon. "I want to introduce my friend Mr. Moyle, Mrs. Winston," said Ed. "And Mr. Moyle, this is Mr. Peter Storm."

Beads of perspiration came out on my nose, which Aunt Mary always used to tell me was most unladylike and ought never to happen. My heart and I just stood still together!

Murmuring something more like a hiccup than a "How do you do?" I saw Peter use his eyes like grappling irons on the camera-eyes of Mr. Moyle. Then his magnetism, like a band of pirates, swarmed aboard of the other's mentality. He put out his hand and shook the hand of the man, whether Camera eyed Dick wished to shake hands or not, and with that shake, the lamp seemed suddenly to be snatched away from behind the aquamarines.

"How do you do, Mr. Moyle? Pleased to meet you," Peter said slowly.

"Pleased to meet you," echoed Mr. Moyle. His Shakespearean forehead had turned red, and there was a slight gasp in his voice, a tone sliding up instead of down. His queer eyes (rather bald-looking because his light lashes curl right up and away from them, leaving them very wide open) turned off their lights, as I said. But though they were vacant compared to what they had been when professionally on the alert, they had a curious effect as if they would *burst* if he couldn't laugh. This may have been produced by the lashes turning up so much. I couldn't make it out at all, anyhow. And the whole *affair* is past my making out. Now, what should you say Peter did to quell Camera-eyed Dick? Was it the look, or was it the way he shook hands?

For he *was* quelled. There's no doubt—or very little doubt—about that. He was *friendly* with Peter Storm. He and Peter and Caspian talked together, and it was Camera-eyes who went away first. Ed was ready to *cry*, I'm sure.

I asked Jack afterward (of course I breathed not a word to Pat), and he said that she and he had guessed nothing of what was going on under the surface of the introduction. They hadn't heard Peter's give-away words; and without that clue there was no reason to suspect.

I shan't sleep to-night because of that "misunderstood virtue" of mine. In other words, Curiosity is gnawing my vitals. Your modern Pandora, alias                   MOLLY.

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## XXIII

### PETER STORM TO JAMES STRICKLAND

DEAR STRICKLAND:

*Boston.*

Caspian has "let loose the dogs of war" on me, or, rather, the first dog is loose. There will no doubt be others yapping on my track. You'll grin when I tell you the first of the breed was your old henchman, Camera-eyed Dick!

Hotel halls seem to be fatal to me lately. I shall get jumpy going into one. Caspian was lying in wait for me to appear with Miss Moore and the Winstons, we having "lost" the others and gone for a walk. Camera-eyes was with him, and I thought it was touch and go for me. However, I turned the tables by doing the camera-eye act myself. Also, I gave Dick's hand a friendly grip. You remember that he's a Mason? Going away, he contrived to palm me a card with a scrawled address: a small hotel where he was spending the night.

Late in the evening I walked round there, taking it for granted that Dick would be in, and that he had recognized me with certainty despite the lapse of time. I counted on his not giving me away to his employer, so I didn't hurry to pay my respects. And I hadn't trusted the old chap in vain. He was loyal to Caspian, so far as not betraying any instructions he may have had; but he did not mind

admitting that he'd come from New York to Boston on receipt of a telegram. I felt I owed him the reward of an explanation, so gave a somewhat garbled one, in which Dick was intensely interested. He confessed that he was "flabbergasted" at sight of "the gentleman he'd come to be introduced to" (me) and for once was disinclined to believe his eyes. He promised silence, refused a reward, as near the V. C. as I'm able to bestow, and I told him to call on you. You're sure to hear from him soon.

This is the second narrow escape I've had within a week. I oughtn't to take these risks till I'm ready to face the consequences, whatever they may be. But I'd do more to be in sight of Patricia Moore's profile which is about all I see of her in the car these days when (in every sense of the word) I'm obliged to take "a back seat." Do, for heaven's sake, finish up your end of the business and give me a free hand, since you yourself say I may in honour take it. I probably should take it even if you said the opposite—that I tell you frankly, as I believe I've told you before. But it's good to have your backing.

I've been to Plymouth to-day, thanks to a chap I've hired to do my work for me, and have returned to Boston, which we shall leave to-morrow for good and all. Caspian had an accident just before starting time—had been out in a taxi on a hurried errand to some shop, and the chauffeur, trying to be helpful, banged the door with C.'s finger in it. The finger was in a glove, or the hurt would have been more serious, but even as it was, when he tried to take the wheel of the G.-G. he found the pain unbearable. I was called—like a male Cinderella—from the ashes

(those of a cigarette) and ordered to drive. In an instant the secretary had become the chauffeur. I can do these fairy godmother tick-acts like lightning; and as Miss Moore didn't think it necessary to change her seat, I knew that Fate was going, anyhow, to give me one good day.

I had never been by road from Boston to Plymouth, and as I'd not expected to drive, I hadn't looked up the route. Caspian probably had, but I didn't want help from him, and I determined to die rather than look at a map. You, a Harvard man, no doubt know the way well, though a motor car was a rare if not unknown species of animal when you were an undergrad.

In the beginning it was easy enough. We simply went out of Boston along the road by which we'd come in: past the Arnold Arboretum of which you Harvard fellows are so proud; Forest Hill, parklike Morton Street, and across the Neponset River, where my dear little seat-mate (who couldn't have guessed how I felt to be by her side again) was enraptured with the view of Boston Harbour. She was gayer than I had seen her since that moonlight night when I came to myself—too late, as it turned out; yet I don't feel somehow that it's *irrevocably* too late. I can't! It was good to hear her laugh again. "Do look," she said, "at the funny little porches on the funny little houses! They put hammocks on ones that are so narrow people have to fall off the porch when they want to get out! Yet see how happy the women look! They must have husbands they love."

Caspian heard, and leaned forward to suppress her. "Patricia, I wouldn't talk so much to the chauffeur if

I were you, while he's driving. He doesn't know the way, and he'd better give his attention to the sign-posts."

Of course I could say nothing. But I reminded myself that snubs generally come home to roost. I hoped he'd "get *his*," as you say, and I hadn't long to wait before poetical justice fell. The man kept up a running fire of information, which he had doubtless culled from a guide-book to impress his fiancée, having no personal interest in history except that it has led up to him. The landscape left him cold; the seas of wild blue chicory and forget-me-not didn't suggest to him the colour of a certain girl's eyes as it did to another chap who had no right to make the comparison. He didn't care for the "Golden Wedding House," or any of the other pretty old houses so beautifully fitted to the pretty old ladies rocking on their "piazzas" under the shade of giant trees. The facts with which he had primed himself, like pocketsful of dry cracknels, were such as "Here" (at East Milton) "was built the first railway in the country. It was horse drawn, and over it was carried" (I think he used the word "transported," which proved the guide-book) "stone from the quarries of Quincy to construct the Bunker Hill Monument." "Here" (at Quincy) "in the middle of the city stands the Stone Temple where are buried the two Presidents, John Adams and John Quincy Adams."

It was then that the snub flew home, with a strong impetus from the exasperated Pat.

"I don't want to know about Bunker Hill Monument being built," she turned round to snap. "I want to think it built itself. And I don't want to know where Presidents are buried. I only want to know where they had

their golden weddings, and where they lived happily. Besides, it gives me a crick in my neck to be always listening to some one behind. If I can't talk to Mr. Stor-r-rm for fear of upsetting him, I won't talk to anybody, please!"

There was one in the eye for Caspian; and it gave me my opportunity to murmur with mere perfunctory politeness (?) that it didn't "upset" me in the least to talk or be talked to while I "chauffed."

After that we did converse a little, about Captain John Smith and Miles Standish, without Caspian venturing to butt in; but I must say he got revenge through my losing myself in Hingham. You remember that wonderful street of lawns and trees with a perfect specimen of an old church? I believe it's the oldest church, still in use, in the United States, but I dared not state this lest C. should seize the chance to snap me up and say I was mistaken. Well, anyhow, I shared so recklessly in Pat's admiration of the said church and the quaint, pleasant houses with flag-staffs sticking out over their doors, that I fulfilled Caspian's prophecy and got lost. The first thing I knew we were bumping over an appalling road, and had to turn back.

"I told you so!" I heard C. muttering like distant thunder, and asked him mildly if he preferred to take the wheel; but his finger was even more painful than his temper. I felt his glare like a gimlet in the back; but Pat more loudly than needful expressed her delight in seeing Hingham a second time. "It is exactly like Cranford," she said. "New England seems to be full of Cranfords, but Hingham is the most Cranfordy of all. And I don't

believe even the Old England Cranford could have such elms in such a wonderful street. They are like tall, transparent green wine glasses set for a dinner party of Titans."

"You get these exaggerated ideas from Mrs. Winston," came another mutter from behind, but no reply was vouchsafed. Speaking of Mrs. Winston, I'd happened to hear her talking with her husband last night, about the day's run to Plymouth, and a word here and there had caught my attention. I remembered that a "sky pilot" named Hobart had come from Hingham in England, and somehow got the new place named after the old. I remembered, too, a romantic story they spoke of: the hiding of "The Nameless Nobleman" between the floors of a South Hingham house, and his marrying the girl who saved him, Molly Wilder. (Jack Winston thinks that all the nicest women since the Christian era have been named Mary.) I hurried to tell Pat about these things, and a few others which I either recalled or made up on the spot. While I talked, in defiance of orders, I somehow contrived to get onto a splendid road to Cohasset: woods for miles and miles; and an idea came into my head—which I passed on—that Abraham Lincoln's ancestors flourished in this region. So, to Scituate, though over a wrong road again (Pat called it "a dear little wrong road"), to Marshfield, where Daniel Webster died and was laid to rest. On the way we "guessed" that a detestable yellow house we saw, with a well and a bucket, were the house, well and bucket of Samuel Woodworth himself, the "Old Oaken Bucket" man. Caspian was sure it wasn't the house, and this seemed to make the darling Pat equally

sure it was. (Don't you think from what I tell you that the signs and omens are good?)

I dared to believe that the girl wasn't sorry to have me beside her again. Once in a while I threw a glance at her face as we spun over the perfect road through woods which might never have been touched by the hand of man, and there was a rapt look on it, the sweetest look you ever saw —sweeter than you ever saw, because you haven't seen *her* yet. But you will—you will!—when you've finished your work and I've finished mine.

Fortunately for me I have a good memory, and luckily I'd kept my ears open while Molly and Jack Winston discussed the route, for I know nothing of this country, which, by the way, I find so beautiful. I reproach myself for thinking too little of my own land, and seeking adventure in others. In Duxbury, you know probably, Miles Standish and John Alden both had houses. John's second house is still standing, and Pat insisted on stopping to see it; though I take courage from her confession that she likes the bold rough Standish best. Queer to remember, in a sleepy little place like Duxbury, that a man who chose to build there had in his mind memories of fierce, wild fighting against the Duke of Alva!

'Past a nice-smelling tarry rope factory we sailed into Plymouth and joined forces with the other cars. It's a fine entrance into the old Pilgrim town, isn't it? Bowers of trees, and some of the noblest elms on earth.

"How do things go?" Molly Winston whispered to me, when we had all crowded hungrily into that jolly old-fashioned yellow-painted hotel you're sure to remember, even though you didn't lunch in it with a Patricia Moore.'

I knew what she meant, because we three (she, her husband, and I) started out with a secret pact against the firm of Caspian and Shuster. And it gave me a good warm feeling to be asked the question, because the fair Molly hasn't been quite as gracious since I voluntarily fell out of ranks at Boston. I hope I shall be able to explain that defection to her some day. Meanwhile, I was glad of a sign of trust and friendship, and replied that I had an idea "things" were looking up for us. "The little lady is ready to bite his head off," I added. Molly shuddered. "He uses the wrong sort of brilliantine," she mentioned. "But even honey and flowers wouldn't make it a pleasant act."

While Caspian (I could almost have pitied him) saw a doctor about his damaged digit, the rest of us, even my reluctant employeress, wandered about looking at the ancient landmarks and watermarks we pretended to have come to see. Perhaps some of us really had come for the purpose—Jack Winston, for instance, who's as keen as mustard on linking New World with Old World history. But, then, he doesn't have to make excuses to snatch a little of his best girl's society, as I, Tom, Dick, and Harry do. As for Moore, it's the opposite. He spends his time making excuses to get away from his fair lady; and most of those excuses are found in the society of Another! I could almost pity Mrs. Shuster, too, she is so ingenuously miserable. But I harden my heart. Neither of the pair is worthy of a pang. And few neglected loveresses have senators to fall back upon. (She's done that literally, once or twice, and heavily, because she's a champion stumbler.)

None of us feel drawn toward monuments, though we may approve of them on principle, but if ever a monument was called for, at any place in the world, that place is Plymouth. All the same, I'm not sure, if I'd had a voice in the matter, that I shouldn't have let the Rock, with its date, tell the story in its own simple way without any further emphasis. What with that, and the welcoming beauty of the Harbour which no Pilgrim with his eyes open could resist, and the Museum, and the ancient houses, I think Plymouth could have held her own.

Somehow or other that witch of a Molly Winston contrived to gather the clan together round her and Jack, and give me a chance to play guide to Pat. To be sure, Mrs. Shuster, loyal to her absent partner, tried to form a hollow square around us. But she couldn't spare more than half an eye from Larry; and half one of Mrs. Shuster's eyes isn't dangerous.

There are quite a lot of things to be "done" in Plymouth, you know, and if they are being done in couples or trios you can always go and gaze at the old Common House while the others are revering Forefathers' Rock. You can bow and smile as you meet them hurrying to the Museum, and search industriously for the Town Brook which decided the Pilgrims to settle at Plymouth. You can make your companion look up into your eyes by telling her what you know or pretend to know about Priscilla, and pretend that the Puritan maid gathered cowslips for her cowslip wine on the shores of the said "very sweet brook." This, and more chat of the same order, will suffice to hold the dear one's attention until you are pretty sure that if you say, "Shall we walk along to Pilgrim Hall

and see the relics?" you and she will be astonished to meet the rest of the party just coming away.

Apropos of Pilgrim Hall, my only failure was there. We did meet the party issuing from the Doric doorway. I'd managed that all right, but Mrs. Shuster turned on the threshold, kindly volunteering to remain and point out objects best worth seeing. I wished her in Halifax, or almost any other place which could be catalogued under the same letter, but short of telling her to go there, I saw no escape.

Whether it was an infliction for Pat or not, I couldn't be sure. I never knew much or wanted to know much, until just lately, about the workings of girls' minds. But I will tell you what she did: she said, "Oh, that is so good of you, Mrs. Shuster! *Do* come with us. It's nice to have some one really interested to go about with. Now Larry, much as I love him, is a worry in a place like this. He and Idonia will just go comfortably back to the hotel and have tea in some nice nook and wait for you, so we shall know where to find them much better than if they loved sightseeing as the others do!"

There are lilies and lilies. This Lily of ours looked suddenly like a tiger lily, rather a faded one, badly in need of water, as Pat took hold of her arm and affectionately pulled her into the marble vestibule. She did not break away with a roar and a bound, as I half expected her to do, but meekly let the cruel child lead her on. I knew then, however, that it was a question only of moments. You've seen a cat, caught up against its will into a lap, feign contentment, while with muscles braced it waits its opportunity to take the lap unawares and spring. That is

about what happened with Mrs. Shuster. She pointed us out a painting of the "Mayflower on Her First Morning at Sea," all *couleur de rose*; she indicated the chairs of Elder Brewster and Governor Carroll which were wobbling about on the *Mayflower* that very morning no doubt; and having brought us to a stand before the Damascus blade of Miles Standish, she considered her duty done.

"I'm tireder than I thought I was," she said. "I believe I shall have to go back to the hotel myself, and rest a bit before we start for Boston. I wouldn't stay long here if I were you. If Mr. Storm buys a guide-book at the hotel, or some postcards, you'll have pictures of everything without standing on your feet."

Pat replied meekly that she would return to the hotel the minute she felt tired, but did want to see John Adams' Bible and a few things like that. Mrs. Shuster mustn't at all mind leaving her.

Mrs. Shuster did mind, but she went nevertheless. I longed to catch Pat's eye, and smile; but she didn't appear to have a smile in her. Such innocent gravity you never saw, and when Mrs. S. had left us, the girl made no reference to the episode.

I did buy some picture postcards, but not until we'd seen everything they represented. I bought also, at the same shop, a pretty little box containing three green candles made of bayberry wax. Both cards and candles I offered to Miss Moore, and she accepted them, sniffing with child-like ecstasy at the candles, which are supposed to give forth, in burning, the perfume which the bayberries pour out in the heat of the sun. Afterward I was told by Molly Winston the sentimental superstition about bayberry

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candles. I wonder if Miss Moore knew it, and if she thought I knew.

I haven't, as you see, given up hope that the forced association of this motor trip may make the child realize how impossible for her would be a permanent association with that worm C. If she breaks her engagement before anything happens, so much the better; but the thing, in one form or other, will now have to happen, of course.

A letter from you could reach me at Bretton Woods, and I should be glad to hear there just when you think affairs might be settled.

I'm hideously impatient, but I'm not unhappy.

Yours as ever, and a lit<sup>le</sup> more,

P. S.

We came back from Plymouth to-night, along the short road, Caspian patched up but sulky as an owl. Luckily I didn't lose the way once.

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## XXIV

EDWARD CASPIAN TO RICHARD MOYLE, KNOWN  
PROFESSIONALLY AS "CAMERA-EYED DICK"

*Portsmouth, New Hampshire.*

DEAR MR. MOYLE:

The more I think of it, the more I feel that you are keeping back something from me. You say that the face of this man Storm "recalls nothing and nobody" to you. I must accept your word. Yet I got the impression that at least he reminded you of some one. I was watching your face at the moment you met.

Since you left me, refusing to interest yourself further in the affair, I have thought of it unceasingly. A sudden and extremely interesting idea has come into my head. I cannot afford to waste it, though without the aid of a competent detective like yourself I may not be able to put it to good use. If you will not change your mind and take up the matter again on new lines, I shall be glad if you can send me a smart man from your agency, a person in whose discretion as well as intelligence you have implicit confidence.

Kindly wire me to the post-office, Ogunquit, Me.

Yours truly,

E. CASPIAN.

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(Telegram from Richard Moyle to Edward Caspian,  
Post-office, Ogunquit, Maine):

*Sorry have no one can recommend for job mentioned.  
Nothing in it. Advise you leave it alone.*

(Richard Moyle to Peter Storm, Ogunquit, Maine. Try  
all hotels):

*Excuse liberty, but look out for E. C. May make you  
trouble.*

(Peter Storm to Richard Moyle, at New York):

*Many thanks. Am looking out.*

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## XXV

### MOLLY WINSTON TO MERCEDES LANE

Wenham.

MERCEDES DEAR:

My first thought as I waked yesterday morning was Aunt Mary. I thought of her in my bath—a cold porcelain bath, rapidly filling up with hot water, and giving me rather the feeling of eating an ice with hot chocolate sauce. I thought of Aunt M. with breakfast and choked her down with my coffee. When we had left our happy home—the Boston hotel—the "chug chug" of our motor sang the song which the West Point cadets have made up for "church call."

"*You've got to go, whether you want to or not!*  
*You're not to go, so you'd better turn out!*  
*Oh, b—ches!*"

But after a while the road was so pretty that I succeeded in forgetting her now and then, as you might forget you were on the way to the dentist's when you passed splendid jewellery and hat shops.

We were also on the way to Marblehead and Salem; Aunt Mary wasn't till afterward.

Marblehead, with all its romance of ancient days, is only about sixteen miles from Boston as the automobile

flies, but you pass a good many sweet things first. We went through Somerville, got lost there, and were guided in every direction but the right one by a plague of boys not much bigger than the "dimes" they didn't earn. Jack simply won't look at maps when in the car, or inquire; expects to find his way by instinct, and somehow generally *does*. (Are *all* men like that?) Crossed the Mystic River, and got on to the velvet surface of the Revere Beach Parkway. But Chelsea came before the Beach: charming old Chelsea, which probably, in its heart, thinks Boston its suburb, and prides itself on almost a century and a half of aristocratic peace since the old fighting days when Israel Putnam won his commission as Major-General there.

There couldn't be a greater contrast than between Chelsea and Revere Beach. It's a good thing that miles of parklike road—fought over once by Independents and British—lie between, or they could never stand each other, those two! Jack and I ought to have come to Revere Beach when we were little boy and girl, for, oh, the joy of it for children! What price the Dragon Gorge, the mountain railway more like the Alps than the Alps are like themselves, the theatres, the shops of every kind, the cottages which are nests for birds rather than commonplace, human habitations?

Opposite, Nahant sat looking delightful and alluring, but we went on to Lynn—Lynn, unattractive at first, and pretty when we got better acquainted, like some of the nicest women I know. It's a great place now for shoes, and was once a great place for pilgrims. What a pity the former are too late for the latter! The Pilgrims must have needed the shoes badly. They could have walked

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along the Old Pilgrim Road to Swampscott if their feet  
were equal to it. And perhaps they forgot their feet, as I  
forgot Aunt Mary, for it is—and must then have been—a  
lovely road.

Hawthorne used to walk to Swampscott, too, as well as  
to Marblehead, but he came the other way, from Salem.  
Do you remember Swampscott was where he found  
pink and white Susan, who gave him the sugar heart?  
That was pink, too, with a touch of white perhaps. She  
sounds so delightful as the "Mermaid!" I'm glad Haw-  
thorne kept the heart for years, and then instead of throw-  
ing it away ate it—gave it honourable burial, so to speak—  
which shows that you *can* have your heart and eat it, too!  
(I must, by the by, make a parable of this for Pat, who is  
eating hers, though she certainly has *not* got it. She has  
given it to some one else, though I fancy she *thinks* she has  
merely mislaid it.) In apropos of hearts, they make  
dories in Swampscott; and it's *not* swampy one bit!

Of course I quoted Whittier's "Skipper Ireson's Ride"  
to Jack, coming toward Marblehead. It was "up to me"  
to show my British husband that I, too, had learned things  
at people's knees.

*"Old Flood Ireson for his hard heart,  
Tarred and feathered, and carried in a cart  
By the women of Marblehead."*

I wasn't certain I got it just right, but did my best to put  
a confident ring into my voice, which is half the battle  
when you're not sure of yourself. What a blow, therefore,  
to be told that in truth and in deed the women of Marble-  
head had nothing to do with the job! Jack says the *men*

did it. And worse still, Captain Ireson was supposed to have been a victim rather than a villain, because his sailors mutinied and refused to let him go to the rescue of the sinking ship. I hate having my childish beliefs disturbed! It tears me all up by the roots, and gives me a pain in my spirit's toes. But never mind, there's plenty more romance, which no one can take away from New England, though the very man who wrote about Ireson complained that it had gone:

*"Gone like the Indian wizard's yell  
And fire dance round the magic rock.  
Forgotten like the Druid's spell  
At moonrise by his holy oak."*

No, no, Whittier, surely you wouldn't say so now if you could see steamboats and trains pouring forth multitudes, and thousands and tens of thousands of motor cars stuffed full of people from all over the world drawn to New England because of its never, never lost halo of romance!

Did I tell you just now that we were coming toward Marblehead? Well, one can do that, and not get to Marblehead. You can keep on seeing Marblehead and expecting to arrive, while in reality you are going all around "Robin Hood's barn." By the way, I never saw a barn exciting enough to belong to Robin Hood till I came with Jack on this tour through New England. Here, barns are as grand as churches, and very much like them, steeples and all.

A lot of things happened to us on the way to will o' the wisp Marblehead—old Marblehead, I mean, for new Marblehead is just a very gay and jolly summer resort, such

as I fancy little Susan would, in her pink sugar heart, have loved. We kept on seeing the old town to our left, across a harbour as full of white yachts and sailboats as a New England pond is of water lilies. Jack was loving everything, and utterly oblivious that beyond Salem lay Aunt Mary-ville. His face was perfectly ecstatic as we crossed a river—Whittier's beloved Merrimac—on an ancient covered wooden bridge. He said the sound of the tires on the slightly loose boards was better music than the followers of Richard Strauss could make from the "noises of life." I do love those covered bridges, don't you? They're so richly brown, some of them, that while one slowly travels along under the roof, it's like looking at the sun through a piece of cider-brown glass. Or if they're not brown, they're a soft, velvet gray—gray as shadows at full moon, gray as the light in dreams.

I hardly know how, eventually, we did get into old Marblehead, for Jack and I were both so infatuated with the way we lost sight now and then of the goal. Imagine a road lined on either side with apple trees. If you haven't seen these, you have never seen such orchards in your life, my Mercédes! If there was anything as good in Eden, no wonder Eve ate that apple. I shouldn't wonder if she fixed her eye on it when it was still a bud.

And then, behind the orchards, there were hills, playgrounds for baby cedars. Everything contrived to look at least two hundred years old (except the blossoms and the motor cars), and even the pigeons had such an air of colonial serenity that they simply refused to stir for a new-fangled thing like an automobile. They sat still, pretending not to see us, and never changed their expressions!

At last we did get into old Marblehead, and I'm so happy to tell you it was exactly like finding our way round the corner in a picture. You know that thrilling corner in pictures, leading somewhere you are dying to see and never can? Well, now I have seen it. It's Marblehead. Round the corner of the front of the picture where the new, smart things are, we cleverly slipped in. And there was the background running up the canvas, all over funny labyrinths of streets generally leading nowhere, or, if anywhere, back to the same garden we'd just passed, a darling garden boiling over with grass pinks, cabbage roses, sweet williams, and bleeding hearts. Each house was just a little quainter than the other, and Jack and I thought we were going to like Marblehead better than any that ever lived, until—we came to Salem, after Manchester and Magnolia. Then—we weren't precisely being *untrue* to Marblehead. No, never that! *But* Salem—perhaps it's fair after all to keep a larger place in memory-land for the Witch City.

It would have been almost a *world* tragedy if, when the great fire swept over the town, it hadn't stopped short of the old part, which is American history incarnate. That "old part" consists of "old, older, oldest." The oldest houses of all, built about 1635, are very, very simple, as if the Puritans had prayed over them to be delivered from temptation and craving for beauty. Then, next are the ones not quite so old, when people began to be rich and see that Beauty wasn't after all the unpardonable sin. These houses of the eighteenth century look as if architects might have been commissioned to come from the Old World to laid them, bringing traditions of gracious

decoration for outside and in. Next, there are the far grander and more stately mansions which grew up after the Revolution, when the good folk of New England knew that their land and their fortunes would be theirs forever, undisputed. Salem had grown into an important place then. Merchants and shipowners had plenty of money to spend. They spent it well, too, for they made their dwellings very beautiful, so beautiful that the witch hunters and Quaker persecutors of the past would have been shocked to the bottom of those hollow places they called their hearts.

What a good thing it is that there wasn't much brick to be had when the first old colonial houses were a-building! To be sure, some of the very best in Salem and Boston and other towns are of brick; but brick had to come in ships from old England, so only those persons with the most money and possibly the most cultivated taste could use it. Consequently the characteristic houses of New England and its borders—the white and yellow houses we think of when we say "New England"—were made of wood; and they are unique in the world.

They say that the oldest buildings of Salem—the Gothic, steep-roofed ones—were meant as copies of gabled cottages on the old home side of the water. But if they were, they were as far off the originals as a child's drawing on a slate is far from a steel engraving; and Jack and I are glad, because these dear things are so ingenuously and deliciously American that they could exist nowhere except on this side.

I was only too glad to stay in Salem as long as possible, because it put off Aunt Mary and Wenham where Jack

and I had promised to stay all night, letting the others go on to wait for us at Newburyport. Jack had a map (he doesn't mind having maps of towns, or looking at road maps when *in* towns), and we took a regular Hawthorne itinerary. We began at the house in Union Street where he was born—a rather pathetic, forlorn house, like the birthplaces of most geniuses; then the next, where the family lived till they moved to Raymond, in sight of the White Mountains; and so on, following to the custom-house where the bored genius weighed and gauged, and not missing a single landmark. All are picturesque to the imagination, but the landmark most picturesque to the eye is of course "The House of Seven Gables," and that, some of those dreadful people who dispute everything nice say, isn't what it pretends to be.

As if such an adorable and perfectly sincere and high-souled looking house would pretend anything! Should I hear such heresy uttered I would stop my ears, but coming on it in print was simple, because all I had to do was to snap the book shut with a bang. It is the dearest, kindest little gray house, which all new houses, no matter how big and distinguished, would be proud to have for their grandmother!

Hawthorne's cousin, Miss Ingersoll, whom he called the "Duchess," lived in the old Turner Street house, and it *had* had seven gables before his day. It's perfectly legitimate to put them back, and even a *duty*, which has been exquisitely carried out. I should like to kiss the hand of the lady who honoured Hawthorne's beautiful memory by making the house as dear as that memory itself. I suppose it was she who had the brilliant idea of using for

a front door an old nailed oak one found in the attic (there must be a lovely attic!), putting the quaint even of ancient times into the kitchen, and retrieving from oblivion the "Duchess's" toasting fork with which she used to make toast for Hawthorne. There's a creepy story about the way he thought of the murder, from seeing, through a tiny window of greenish glass, a cousin of his fast asleep and looking as if dead. But there's a story just as fascinating about every house in Salem, connected with Hawthorne. Romantic and interesting things followed him about in his life, like tame dogs, though he didn't always realize at the moment that they were romantic or interesting. Sometimes he thought only that they were tame.

All over the place you feel the thrill of witches and the torturing of Quakers. That's partly thanks to Longfellow, and Whittier, of course, but mostly from the influence which such tremendous happenings leave, I think. It's as if some picture of the past were in the atmosphere, and now and then, out of a corner of your eye, you caught a glimpse, as you do of the "ghost" of a rainbow when the rainbow seems to have gone.

The "Witch House," where Judge Corwin lived at the time of the persecution, is almost hidden away now, as if it were trying to escape from something, and at last brought to bay like a very small, fierce animal. Even now I can hardly bear to think of those days, and all those poor people suffering through a few naughty, hysterical children. I'm sure the Indian woman Tituba could haunt me in Salem even if I lived in a perfectly new, perfectly good modern hotel! I should have tried the experiment,

I think, if it hadn't been for Aunt Mary being so nearby, at Wenham.

Well, quite late in the afternoon (I forgot to tell you we lunched, but you may take that for granted, with so many men in the party) we said good-bye to Salem. We said other things, too, all in praise of it; and Jack felt particularly reverential because Salem sent the first ships from America to Indian and Russian ports. Wasn't it sporting when you think of what ships were then? But these seafaring men of the New England coast were like the men of Devon, the "bravest of the brave."

Aunt Mary had plumped heavily down on my heart again, before we got to Beverly, and this time I couldn't put her out of my mind though the grandeur of the north coast was in my eyes. Oliver Wendell Holmes lived in Beverly and loved it, but then he had no Aunt Mary in the neighbourhood.

Did you ever read what Thackeray said about Wenham Lake Ice? It seems every London house of any pretension had it on its dinner table, but I don't think it travels so far in these days of artificial ice. The lake's still there, anyhow, in a hollow to the left of the road as you go, gleaming blue and mysterious as watching eyes between the dark trunks of a pine forest. Then, after that lake, there was no more excuse for lingering, unless at the monument. We came into Wenham. Jack was trying to look brave.

"In a few minutes now," said he, with galvanized cheerfulness, "we shall be having tea with your Aunt Mary."

At that instant (we had purposely dropped back to bring up the rear of the procession after Salem, letting even the lumbering Hippopotamus bumble on ahead) we





beheld all our family of cars drawn up under some sky-scraping elms, in front of the most delectable tea-house you ever met in your life. The Hippo was in front of a very fine old white church, with "I am one of the pillars of New England" written in every line of it; but it was certainly the tea-house which had arrested its career.

There was a large green and white striped umbrella or two protecting some little tables, and grouped round those little tables were our friends.

"I'm hanged if we'll be having tea with my Aunt Mary!" said I, with that firm-jawed look Jack has got to know and fear as characteristic of the American wife at bay.

So we had tea there, under elms so generously deep and thick that large populations of robins live in them without ever having seen each other's faces. They were, to the tree world, what Blenheim is in castle world. People can come and live there for years, they say, without the duke ever knowing they've arrived. Well, so could whole families of birds live in these elms without the leading robin hearing an alien chirp.

We drowned our sorrows in tea and cream, and buried our sinister premonitions in scones. Also cakes. A wonderful woman had made them—a lady-woman. She will be the heroine of my great American novel, if I ever write one. I hope to goodness she won't be gone from Wenham before it's finished and I can send her a presentation copy! Everything was green and white in the tea-house, except the dear little things to be sold there: weather-cocks, and door-stops, and old china. We bought specimens of these as sops to Cerberus—I mean, as presents for Aunt Mary—and when there was no longer a

pretext for lingering we crept reluctantly away with the spoils.

It was absolutely no comfort to me, as we crawled through the pretty square, and approached "Miss Keddison's mansion" (only too easy to find), that Wenham would be a lovely place to spend not only one but many nights in. There, on a colonial porch, behind colonial pillars, in a colonial rocking-chair, sat Aunt Mary on the watch. *She* looked not only colonial but Doric!

We had got ahead of the others by this time, and my aunt, rising from her chair, with a gesture stopped the whole procession. I don't know whether she meant to do this or not, but no one would have dared pass, any more than if she had been a railway barrier with "Stop! Look! Listen!" painted on her high white forehead.

We slowed down: the Grayles-Grice, the Wilmot, the Hippo, and our Hiawatha, as we have lately named our ~~car~~.

Aunt Mary descended the steps and came to the gate. Jack jumped out, forgetting he was lame, and nearly fell. I screamed. Every one scrambled or leaped or slid to the rescue; and that was the way in which Providence arranged for Peter Storm and Pat Moore and Larry, to say nothing of those who mattered less, to become Aunt Mary's guests. Providence is not too important a word, as you will see when I tell you as much as I'm allowed to tell, about—what came of the visit.

Aunt Mary has many virtues. They stick out all over her like pins, but there are some which aren't uncomfortably sharp. Her hospitality, for instance. This house of hers at Wenham isn't one of the prettiest in the place, but

it is white and dignified, and the over-arching trees give it charm. Aunt Mary is proud of it, and I think she was really pleased to welcome the crowd. Besides, when she was in New York on business, cutting coupons or something, Jack and I talked to her about Larry and Pat. She was very interested, and said she had been taken to Kidd's Pines to a garden party, some fifteen years ago, by Cousin John Randolph Payton, who left me Awepesha, you know. She thought that she still had some snapshots of the garden which she had taken herself that afternoon. In those days, it seemed, she had threatened to develop a craze for photography, but had found that it "interfered too seriously with her more intellectual pursuits." However, she used to paste her trophies in scrapbooks, and she said that when she got home from New York she would look up the volume of that date. It ought to be in the attic, though she had not seen it for a number of years.

Jack and I thought she would forget about this, and we had indeed forgotten it ourselves when we arrived at Wenham. Aunt Mary, however, had not. She greeted Larry warmly (for her) and assured him that, if her niece had kept her informed of the route, she would have written or telegraphed asking the whole party to tea. Not knowing our whereabouts, she could not do this, but was delighted to find the cars stopping at her door, and hoped that their occupants would all take tea with her.

Every one was simply stuffed with scones and chocolate cake, but such was the look in Aunt Mary's eye that none dared confess the tea-house debauch. Her invitation was accepted, and, eighteen strong, we filed into her parlour. Luckily it's as big as a good-sized country schoolroom, and

there's a mid-Victorian "suite" consisting of two sofas, a settee, a couple of easy chairs and eight uneasy ones. Aunt Mary is of those worthy women who upholster themselves and dress their furniture, so everything in her home is rather fussy, lots of antimacassars and tidies and scarfs and that sort of thing. Besides, she thinks flowers are for gardens, not for houses, with the exception of some wax ones made by herself when a girl and preserved under glass. Still, there's such a pet of an old Chinese wall paper, and everything is so exquisitely neat that the effect isn't so bad as you might suppose.

Aunt Mary has a *flair* for liking the wrong people, and wronging the right ones, so of course she took quite a fancy to Ed Caspian, and was somewhat stiff with Peter, whom Mrs. Shuster introduced as "my secretary, Mr. Storm." However, she was as nice as she could be to Larry, and asked if I had mentioned her visit to Kidd's Pines. When she heard that I had not, she was surprised and grieved at my carelessness.

"My niece was always inclined to be forgetful," said she. "I can't think where she inherited it from. The first thing I did on my return from New York was to look in the attic for my old photograph scrapbooks. I have a place for everything, and everything in its place, in this house; but I travel a great deal, and occasionally my servants, with the best intentions, upset my arrangements. I found several of the little volumes exactly where I expected to lay my hand on them, but I am very sorry to say the one I wanted was missing. If I had been sure that I should have the pleasure of seeing you and your daughter, Mr Moore, I would have looked even more thoroughly, for

I'm *sure* the photographs exist. It was fifteen years ago this summer that I attended the garden party at Kidd's Pines, with my cousin, Mr. Payton. I met you and Mrs. Moore for a moment, I remember quite well. You both looked almost too young to be married, I thought, but your little girl was about four years old. She was not at the party officially" (Aunt Mary smiled at her own coy wit), "but I met her with a boy much older, who was playing with her. I took a snapshot of them both together, standing by a swing which was in a retired part of the grounds."

By this time Larry was bored to extinction, but still charming, as he always is with women, young or old, pretty or plain. He pretended so pleasantly to be disappointed at the loss of the book (he loathes looking at photographs) that Aunt Mary was fired to a renewed effort.

"Why, now I come to think of it," said she, "there's another place in the attic where the book quite well might be. If you will excuse me, I'll go up and try to find it."

Larry hastened to protest that he wouldn't trouble her for the world, but Aunt Mary was firm in her desire to please, though sorry to desert her guests. As the argument went on, Peter Storm abruptly got up and handed me a plate of cake. "Heavens, no more!" I murmured in an anguished whisper. "I feel as if I should never be able to look cake in the face again."

"Don't then, but look me in the face," he mumbled. I did so, surprised. "Please ask to go and search for that book, and take me with you," I saw, rather than heard, the words formed by his lips.

Mine not to question why! Mine but to do or die!

Instantly I offered, in a honeyed tone, to save Aunt Mary for her guests, by myself searching the attic. (Dear Dad and I stayed with her over one melancholy Christmas when I was a kid. We arrived by train, of course, and saw nothing of the country. As for Wenham itself, it was feet deep in snow, so I saw nothing of that either, but I did see the attic. It was my refuge and my joy. I worship garrets.) Of this episode I reminded my aunt, and assured her that, though my last visit had been so long ago, I remembered the topography of the attic. If she would tell me the place to look, I would guarantee to find the volume if it existed.

Aunt Mary proceeded at once to mention the date of that Christmas visit, and my age at the time, so now everybody who can be bothered reckoning up knows just how long I have been twenty-six. Having made this revelation to those whom it concerned and did not concern, she decided to accept my offer. I jumped up to go, and at the door, as if on a sudden thought, exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Storm, do come along and protect me from garret ghosts."

He came, and we talked of indifferent things on the way up: of the house, and the steepness of the attic stairs. At the top of the steps, however, he changed his tone. Aunt Mary had mentioned a certain oak secretary-bookcase with glass doors, standing close to the head of the stairs, and as I steered for it, along a narrow lane between ancient trunks and packing cases, Peter said: "Mrs. Winston, I've made up my mind to tell you something, and this is a good place to do it. When I've told you, you'll understand why I didn't want Miss Keddison to find that book of photo-

graphs, and why I don't even want it to exist in this house."

Then he went on, and told me the most extraordinary and astonishing story. I'd give anything to pass it on to you; and having got *so* far, you'll curse me for not going farther! But I had to promise I wouldn't write or breathe the secret to any one except Jack. So, alas, you must wait till the embargo is taken off.

Peter wouldn't let me look for the little red volume described by Aunt Mary, because I was to say to her that I couldn't find it. He it was who opened the drawer of the secretary where she had thought the book might be, and I heard a rustling of papers for a minute or two. Then the drawer was shut. I asked no questions, but when we went down to report the failure of my quest I *fancied* that the left side of Peter's chest was slightly—very slightly—more prominent than the right, as if he had something thicker than a handkerchief in his breast pocket.

I am writing this in my bedroom, by lamplight (no gas, no electricity for Aunt Mary), and instead of hating our visit and nearly perishing, as we expected to do, Jack and I are enchanted that we came. It evidently *was* to be, as servants say when they break one of your best cups. Now we may be able to help (?) along.

Much love. Yours,  
MOLLY OF THE GUILTY SECRET.

## XXVI

### MOLLY WINSTON TO MERCEDES LANE

Bretton Woods.

DEAREST GIRL:

I am positively afraid to write you, lest you and Monty think me a *Beast* for harrowing up your feelings about Peter Storm and the book of photographs, and Aunt Mary's garret, the way I did, and then letting you down with a dull thud.

Jack says it was cruelty to animals (he doesn't state what kind) to have told you anything, as I couldn't tell you all. But I just got going, and couldn't bear to stop till I had to!

We've travelled such a long way now, since Wenham, that I can't describe all the places to you as I generally do in my letters, and, besides, it might make you even more cross with me than you are already, to read on and on, hoping for some startling development about the Stormy Petrel, and find nothing but scenery. However, I've kept a diary to enclose in this, which you can read or not, as you like. If you do, you won't be buoyed up with false expectations.

About Peter: as the war correspondents say, "We may look for great events in the course of the next few weeks."

About Pat: she is still engaged to Ed Caspian, but I am looking for great events in that direction also. The only



YORK

A bit of the rock-bound Maine coast



trouble is, one can't tell with her which way the wind will blow. If Caspian gets into deep water, she may feel—oh, well, we must pray that things will shape themselves just right all round.

About Larry: I don't think I'd much care if it weren't for Pat. For a perfectly fascinating human creature he is the most selfish pig I ever met, and for a selfish pig he is the most charming being! He has certainly tried Lily's patience to the breaking point, but it hasn't broken, and seems warranted not to break. Sometimes I've thought that he wanted to force the woman to throw him over, then I've changed my mind and decided that he doesn't flirt for a motive. He simply can't *help* it. And if the fleshpots of Egypt can only be his, mixed with a diet of orange blossoms, I verily believe he'll take them together.

Ever your affectionate and apologetic,

MOLLY OF THE GUILTY SECRET.

MOLLY'S DIARY FOR MERCEDES

*From Wenham to Bretton Woods*

Jack said at Ipswich that one ought to have a guide-catcher on one's automobile, like a cowcatcher on an engine. The air was dark with would-be guides, though it's a beautiful town to get lost in. We came to it from Wenham (where I ought to have mentioned the polo, Jack wouldn't have forgotten) along a dream of a road lined with lovely white birches and lovely white houses. The houses keep on being lovely at Ipswich, and the wonderful elms are many-branched, like immense Jewish candlesticks of green-gold. You would never think the devil

would come to such a place! But it seems he did. There was a church he had heard of where the folk were particularly religious, and he wanted to have a look. One was enough, however. He jumped right over the church to avoid it and get back home as quickly as he could, and to this day you can see his footprint on a black rock in the park.

That's one story. Another is that instead of going home, he bounded to Rowley, where there is another charming church, looking the very haunt of peace, good will to men. I can quite believe that even the devil might come a long way to gaze at some of these old New England churches. You can't think what a feeling of pure delight they give to the mind, in spite of, or because of, their simplicity. The green banks where they are built might be vast altars with elms for the altar candlesticks, and the smooth sward for the altar cloth. The devil may have heard all this, and wanted to see for himself if it were true. I don't know how he escaped from Rowley, as he left no footprint, though the easiest way would have been along the good Bay Road! Maybe he had a secret passage down under the sea, which isn't very far off. Spinning on between meadows, you can see it away to the right, misty blue as the wild forget-me-nots which mingle with a thousand other wild flowers.

Newburyport is like a perfume bottle for its sweet or, rather, two perfume bottles: one filled with salt fragrance from the sea, the other with the scent of apple blossoms from countless orchards. That sounds as if it were only a small village, but it isn't: it's a town, and one of the most historic. Almost everything exciting that can hap-

pen in New England has happened at Newburyport—from earthquakes which uprooted corn and set all the bells to ringing, to visits of the French aristocracy, dashing exploits of privateers, the entertaining of General Washington, and the quickest proposal of marriage on record. Almost the nicest thing about Newburyport, however, and one of the nicest things I ever heard, is the story of Timothy Dexter, who grew very rich, nominated himself for the peerage, and assumed the title of "Lord." He was considered a half-witted sort of fellow, who inherited a little money and didn't know what business to engage in. "Charter a ship," said a practical joker whom he consulted. "Buy a cargo of warming-pans and send them to Cuba." Timothy Dexter did as he was told; but fortune is always supposed to favour simpletons, you know! It happened in Cuba that there were not nearly enough buckets to bail up the syrup from the vats in the sugar-cane mills, and those at hand were too small. Dexter's warming-pans were just the thing! The whole cargo was bought up, fetching huge prices, and "Lord" Timothy's fortune was made. After that he bought himself a big house and planted his garden full of dreadful wooden statues, the worst of all representing himself.

We lost our fine roads as we left Massachusetts for New Hampshire, but the country was beautiful: stone-wall country again, with straight, dark pines; and the road grew better as we neared the dear old sea-going town of Portsmouth, full of beautiful and romantic houses. In one of the best of them Governor Wentworth invited his friends to a party and flabbergasted them all by turning the "party" into a wedding. He married his housemaid—

but she was a beauty! But of all the pleasant things of Portsmouth the Thomas Bailey Aldrich house is the best. This lovely old house is kept exactly as he left it. His spirit seems to pervade the place as a fragrance lingers after the flowers have gone.

You may call Portsmouth "Strawberry Bank" if you like. And once, at the mouth of Great Bay, there was a terrible bar of rocks beautifully named "Pull-and-be-Damned-Point." People used to love saying it when they felt cross, for even the ministers couldn't scold them for mentioning it; but an interfering government took it away for the prosaic motive of making a fine harbour.

Across the Piscataqua River we were plumped into Maine, at Kittery, where there's a big navy yard now, and where once they made splendid ships.

By a road that ran through woods and past ideal, story-book farmhouses we came to York, where Captain John Smith came by sea. There we had to stop and look at "Ye Olde Gaol," because it's the very oldest building of the American Commonwealth. The prisoners used to be "sold" for several years, to work out their punishment, just as if they were regular slaves; and now in the gaol they have all sorts of relics of past, queer customs. There's a fort still standing, too, with an overhanging upper story to shoot Indians from, like the houses I wrote you about when we first came into New England. There was a frightful massacre of the settlers once upon a time, and a frightful revenge. Also there was a witch, who lies buried under a great stone, so huge that she can't possibly squeeze through at night to ride on her deserted broom-stick. There are legends, too, and the nicest we heard

was the ghost-tale of Pirate Trickey, who was hanged on the seashore. That atonement wasn't enough for his crimes, though! He still haunts the beach, ever binding sand with a rope, and groaning above the sound of the waves as the sand slips away. And I mustn't forget "Handkerchief Moody," who gave Hawthorne his idea for the "Minister's Black Veil"; but he was real and neither ghost nor legend.

There's a modern York, too, and so much of it that you might almost miss the old if you didn't know. Lots of interesting people have stayed there: Mr. Howells, and Mark Twain, and your beloved Thomas Nelson Page among the rest, but beyond their zone is the zone of the tiny toy cottages, the crowded boarding-houses, the snub-nosed Lord motor cars rolling along the beach close to the rolling waves, and beginning to sink in the sand if they stop. Beyond again, woods which might be primeval, broken with farms as hidden away in their midst as those of the early settlers; here and there a pile of fragrant cut timber; now and then a few hayricks, in fields surrounded by vast tracts of pineland. Jack and I began to think we were on the most beautiful road yet.

We lunched at Ogunquit, beloved of artists, and then fell so in love with it ourselves that we stayed all the rest of the day and all night, too. It's a fishing village, but you don't stop in the village. You stop under the wing of a large gray, mother-bird-looking hotel close to the shore, and away from everything else. On one side there is a cove with shiny brown rocks so thinly trimmed with grass that they look like a suit of giant armour showing through a ragged green cloak. On the other side is sea,

blue by day as if it flowed over bluebell fields—strangely blue as it sweeps up to embrace the rose and golden sands, the apricot pink sands. Toward evening these sands were covered with gulls, lying thick as white petals shaken down from invisible orchards. And the mourning cry of the sea-birds was as constant and never ending as the sea-murmur. We forgot we heard it! But suddenly, as night fell, we remembered, because the crying ceased as if it obeyed a signal for silence. No sooner had it stopped than the moon blossomed out from the sea-mist like a huge rose unfolding behind a scarf of blue gauze. We were glad we had stayed!

Next morning we awoke for lost time by getting up early and starting on again: a pretty road through the village of Wells, with the sea in the distance. All the farmhouses seemed to take summer boarders or give meals, and sell vegetables or something. They showed nice enticing samples at their gates: strawberries, green peas, honeycomb, or gilded eggs. It did look so idyllic!

We couldn't mistake Kennebunk when we came to it, because it advertises itself on a sign-post: "This is Kennebunk, the Town You Read About." I hadn't read about it, but I felt I ought, for if ever there was a typical New England town, Kennebunk is *It*! We slipped in along a grass-grown, shady way, with old houses looking at us virtuously with sparkling eyes, as virtuously as if they hadn't been built with good gold paid for rum. I think that was what the ships used to bring back from their long voyages; but maybe the most virtuous-looking houses were built with molasses. The ships brought that, too.

There are two rivers—the Monsam (at the Monsam

House Lafayette stayed) and the Kennebunk, and there's a roaring mill, but greatest of all attractions at Kennebunk is that of going on to Kennebunkport. Mrs. Deland has a house there, and Booth Tarkington, too, and it's a dear delightful place, with arbourlike streets running inland, and deep lawns with elms shaped like big shower bouquets for brides.

It wasn't long after Kennebunkport that we beheld for the first time sawmills, and logs that had come down from the White Mountains. That was a thrill! For we were on our way to the White Mountains. We saw no sign of them yet, but there was no cause for impatience. The landscape was as lovely as if planned by the master of all landscape gardeners. There were quaint features, too, as well as beautiful ones: everywhere funny little tin boxes standing up on sticks by the roadside, labelled "U. S. Mail," with no guardians but squirrels and birds, and apparently no one to read or send letters.

Biddeford was attractive, and so was Portland, but Portland was the means of delaying our car. Jack would go wandering to the eastern side of the nice city, to find a monument he had read about, overlooking Casco Bay. Underneath are buried, in one grave, the commanders of the *Enterprise* and the *Boxer*, British and American ships. The American won, but both commanders were killed, and the Britisher had been so brave that they thought their own captain would like to lie by his side. It wasn't a grand monument to see, but I love the idea. And another thing I love about Portland is the thought that Longfellow was born there in sight of the ocean.

By and by, a good long time after we had got out of

Portland by Forest Avenue, our road began to run up-hill. In a park leading to Raymond, where Hawthorne "savagized" as a boy, our hearts beat at sight of a sign saying "White Mts." Just that! Abrupt but alluring. White birches were like rays of moonlight striping the dark woods, and there was the incense smell of balsam firs. We sniffed the perfume joyously and reminded each other—Jack and I—that Maine is America's Scotland: like Scotland for beauty of lake and forest and mountain; like Scotland, too, "hard for the poor, and a playground for the rich."

Along a rough but never bad country road we flashed past lake after lake—Sebago the biggest—and ahead of us loomed far-off blue heights like huge incoming waves sweeping toward an unseen shore. No longer did we need a sign-post to point us to the mountains; but there were some things by the way that surprised us. Suddenly we found ourselves coming on the "Bay of Naples," a big sapphire sheet of water ringed in with some perfectly private little green mountains of its own. It was as if we had dreamed it, when we plunged into forests again, deep, mysterious forests of hemlock. Cowbells tinkled faintly, as in Switzerland, though we saw no cows, and there was no other sound save the sealike murmur of the trees—that sound which is the voice of Silence. Lakes and ponds lay at the feet of dark slopes, as if women in black had dropped their mirrors and forgotten to pick them up.

We were back in New Hampshire again for the night, for we stopped in North Conway, at a hotel in a great garden. If it had liked, it could have called the whole valley its garden, for it is a vast flowery lawn with moun-

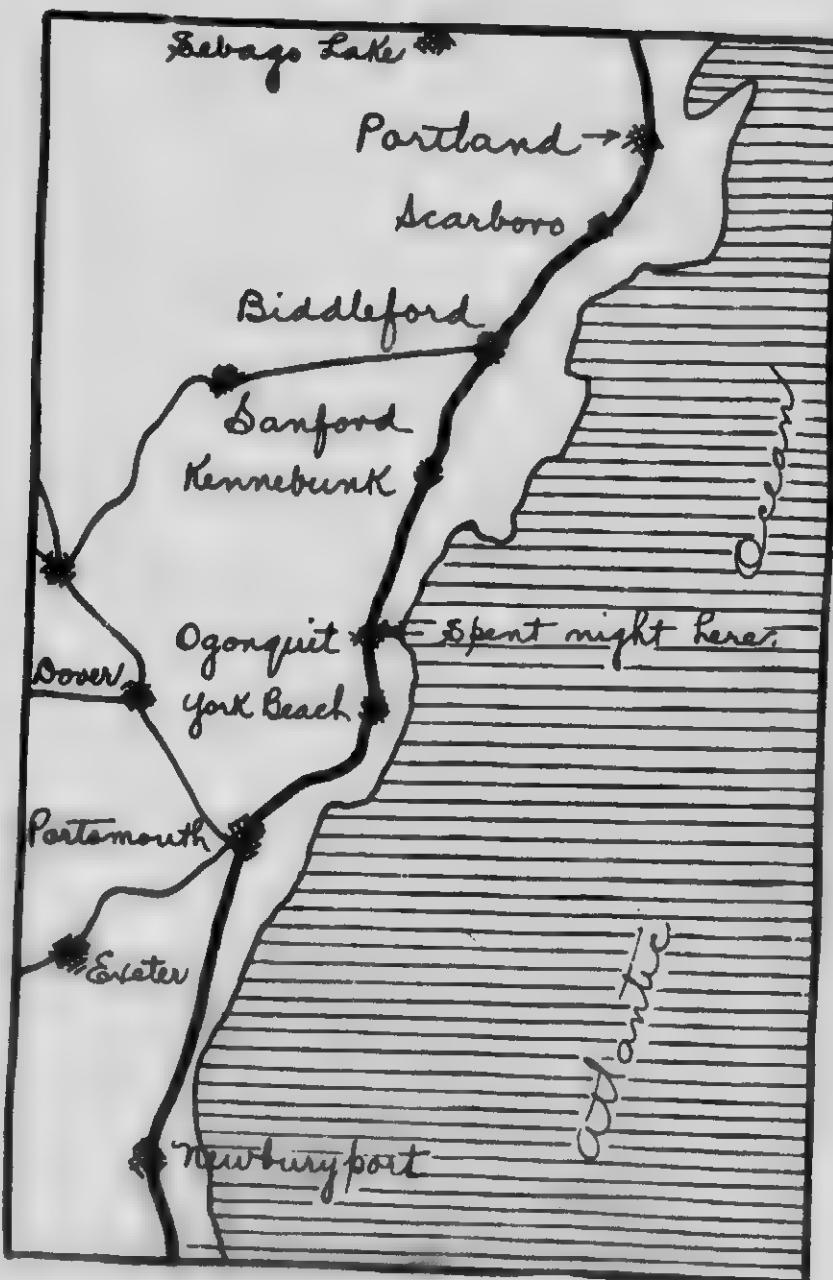
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"The air is spiced with the fragrance of balsam fir  
to Crawford Notch" . . . on the way







tains for a wall. Such a strange wall, with a high-up stone shelf on which you might think the brave Pequawket Indians had left the images of their gods, beyond the reach of white men. They had a fine village of wigwams where our hotel stands now, facing the mountains it's named for, and the trees and the Saco River haven't forgotten their old masters' songs of war and of hunting.

This part of the world must be the intimate, hidden home of balsam firs. The air is spiced with their fragrance, and not only the gay little shops at North Conway, but each farmhouse and cottage we passed next day, going on to Crawford Notch, sold pillows of balsam fir.

By this time we began to pity and patronize ourselves, because we had thought that nothing could be as beautiful as our ways of yesterday. The ways of to-day were the most beautiful of all. We were going to Bretton Woods, and on the way we learned a great secret—this: that when the Fairies made their flit—the well-known Dymchurch Flit—they decided to emigrate to the White Mountains. Somebody had told them—probably it was the Moon—that the scenery there was marvellously suited to their tastes, and would give them a chance to try experiments in landscape gardening according to Fairy ideas. It seemed likely that they might remain undiscovered in the new fastness for many centuries, and that when the time came for their presence to be suspected, the world would have assumed a new policy toward the Fay race. No cruel calumnies would be written or spoken about them, such as saying that they cast spells on children or animals, and it would be between Man and Fairy a case of “live and let live.”

Some dull, unobservant people might think that our road was walled on one side by gray-blue rocks, but in reality they are dark, uncut sapphires, a façade decoration for the Fairy King's palace. Those same dullards might talk of scattered boulders. They are trophies, teeth of giants slain by Fairy warriors. Fairies melt cairngorms and topazes which they find deep in the heart of the mountains, and pouring them into the sources of rivers and brooks give the colour of liquid gold to the water which might otherwise be a mere whitish-gray or brown. Fairies crust the stones with silver filagree-work dotted with diamonds. Fairies have planted blue asters and goldenrod and sumach in borders, studying every gradation of colour, and while the flowers lie under the spell of the sun they become magic jewels, because the seeds were brought from Fairyland. Fairies, who no longer bewitch children, have turned their attention instead to enchanting the young, slender birches of the mountain waysides. The enchantment consists in causing rays of moonlight always to glimmer mysteriously on the white trunks, in full daylight. They seem illuminated, even to eyes that haven't found out the secret. The carpets of moss are the Fairies' roof-gardens, where they dance and pretend to be ferns if you look at them. The round stones in the water-beds are the giants' pearls which were lost in the great battle. The music of the forest is an orchestra consisting of Fairy voices and stringed instruments, harps, violins, and 'cellos. And now and then I caught a high soprano note beyond the powers of a Tetrazzini.

It was a Fairy who told me that Mount Washington is bare because he gave his green velvet mantle to a smaller

mountain, though he, at his cold height, needed it much more than his smaller brethren of the Presidential Range. And from a Fairy, too (after we had passed the wide wonder of Crawford's Notch), I heard the story of Nance's Brook. It is the gayest of all the gay brooks of the mountains, so evidently it has forgotten Nance and ceased to mourn her. But she—a beautiful girl of the neighbourhood—drowned herself there when her lover went off with a town beauty. The brook used to be the Fairies' favourite bathing-place, and they could enter from a secret corridor in their sapphire-fronted palace. Of course they could no longer use it after the drowning; but they cased the body of Nance in crystal, like a fly in amber; and there, under the running water, her face can sometimes be seen on midsummer nights.

Thus, Mercédès, ends your Molly's diary, for we have come to Bretton Woods!

## XXVII

EDWARD CASSIAN TO DANIEL WINTERTON  
THE MANAGER OF A DETECTIVE  
AGENCY IN NEW YORK

*Bretton Woods.*

SIR:

I have received you letter and telegram, and am glad to find that you have a better opinion of my deductions than was held by your confrère, Mr. Moyle. The longer I dwell on the idea the more does it appear that circumstantial evidence all points one way. Why should this unimportant and poor young man have an influence so extraordinary over Marcel Moncourt? More than one millionaire would have given a fortune to Moncourt for less work than he is doing at Kidd's Pines practically for nothing. It is known that he spoiled his son and brought him up with the airs of a prince who might succeed to a throne. It is known also that the son went abroad directly after old Stanislaws' sudden death. The story is a family scandal; but I have woven together a few of the threads and can put them into your hands, which may help you to speed along your inquiries.

At this time I was not on intimate terms with my relatives. My sphere, in fact, did not touch theirs. I never saw Moncourt's son, but I have heard him described as dark, tall, and somewhat distinguished looking. This

## THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR 315

might also be a flattered description of the man in question.

I think I had better mention, in the same connection, an event which has just occurred. I cannot say I am able to find that it has any concern with the affair on which you are engaged, but you may see deeper than I do. At all events, I will bring it to your attention for what it may be worth.

You have no doubt heard of the very fine mansion on Long Island, tentatively called "the Stanislaws House?" I hoped that when I became heir to the property it would be mine, with the rest. Unfortunately this was not the case. It had been left to a friend of the late heir, as was indubitably proved by Mr. James Strickland, who legally represented the Stanislaws family, father and son. Now, through Strickland, the place has been offered to me, if I wish to buy it. I should be inclined to do so if I did not suspect something underhand in the business, though what, I cannot define.

The somewhat extended motor trip which has taken me away from Kidd's Pines is now nearly over; but you might wire anything important to Great Barrington, Mass., where I shall be stopping for a night after leaving here.

Yours truly,

E. CASPIAN.

## XXVIII

PATRICIA MOORE TO ADRIENNE DE MONCOURT

*Bretton Woods.*

CHÈRE PETITE:

I must write to tell you I am happy again, though I ought not to be, and have no right. Oh, it is like a miracle coming to pass, to be suddenly happy when you have thought all was at an end.

Suppose that it has poured down rain on your poor head for many days, and you are wet and cold, oh, but cold through and through to your heart, and you have forgotten the feel of sunshine. Then, of a sudden, a stream of light breaks out and dazzles in your eyes. You are warm, you sing for joy. In the back of your mind a voice may say, "The clouds will shut up again, this is not to last." For the moment you are happy and do not care for what will come. You just hold out your arms to the warm ray of light.

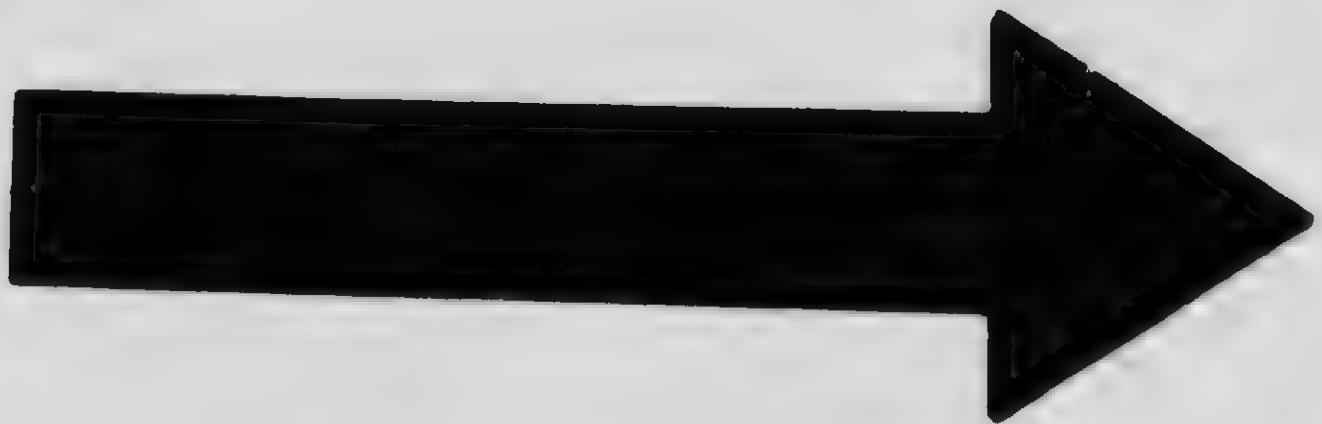
It was like that with me to-day, and in all senses of speaking, for I was in a great rain, alone and very sad and soaked—but I will tell you. There is none else I may tell, not even Molly; for if I said this to her, she would again offer and insist to lend us money that the ring of Mr. Caspian could be got from the Mont de Pieté and given back to him. She would think that was the only thing

## THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR 317

needed to end the engagement which makes me miserable; and so it would have been at first, or almost the only thing. Now there is more, for Mrs. Shuster begged dear Larry to borrow some money from her the other night, when he had played poker in the hotel at Boston with some men he met. Larry has such luck at the games of chance, nearly always, he did not stop to think, "What will happen if I lose?" He played with all the eager fire that it is his nature to put into everything he does, and these men were high punters, as reckless as Larry and much more rich. So it was five thousand dollars my poor boy had to borrow, and we cannot take the money which our wonderful Monsieur Moncourt makes for us from Kidd's Pines, because of the bankruptcy, if that is the word, and so much always owing to creditors. It is as if we held out a sieve for our great Marcel to pour gold dust into, and it nearly all goes before we can touch it.

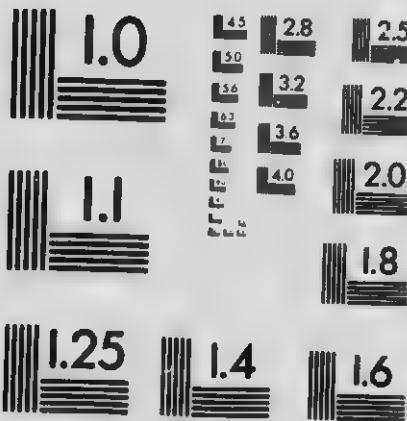
Naturally I cannot fail Larry when it is in my power to save him, no matter what the consequences to me. But listen, *ma chérie!*

It is yesterday we came to Bretton Woods, after a drive of the highest beauty, with famous points of view. I had to see them with Mr. Caspian at my side—all but the view of Crawford Notch, as it is named, which is of a surprising splendor, and where we stopped to get down from our automobiles and walk about. When that happens—the getting down, I mean—I often find myself with the Winstons, and Mr. Caspian does not care much to come where they are. Then, when I am with them, often Mr. Storm is there, too. So the Crawford Notch was the best as it was the most beautiful of my moments in the White Moun-



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tains till this afternoon. And now I have come to what I wish to tell.

When we waked in the morning of to-day it was to see rain coming down in the cataracts. This spoiled our plan of taking some walks and seeing the golf course, which Captain Winston loves to do. But also, the rain made it not good to travel. Shut up, one misses the beauty of the ways. Somehow it arranged itself through the influence of Molly and Jack that we stay long enough to have a fine day. Not to be with Mr. Caspian too much, I stayed a good deal in my room. I tried to read a novel I bought in the hotel—a hotel splendid enough for a big city, though it stands among wild mountains, so far away from the world it is—Molly says—as if Diogenes had had his tub enlarged and fitted up by Ritz. But this novel had a sad ending, I found when I looked ahead, so I could not bear to go on. By that time it was afternoon. I went downstairs. Most of our people were playing bridge, among them Larry and Mrs. Shuster, and Mr. Caspian. Molly and Jack were not there. Neither was Mr. Storm. When he saw me Mr. Caspian got up, and told his table they must make a dummy. I wished then I had stayed in my room, but it was too late. The best I could do was to walk out on the veranda—an immense veranda where the most fierce rain could not follow you to the chairs against the wall.

Molly and Jack love fresh air, so I thought perhaps to find them sitting out there. But they were not to be seen; and when Mr. Caspian came on and on after me, though he hates what they love, I took a most desperate resolution. I went straight ahead as if I had come downstairs to do it, and walked right off the veranda into the pouring rain. I

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"The young, slender birches of the mountain waysides"



had no umbrella, and my head was bare and I had on a dress of white shantung silk. I knew he wouldn't follow me into the rain, and he didn't. He stood at the top of the steps and called after me that I was a crazy girl. "Come back!" he said, as if he had the right to order me about. "You will get soaked to your skin and catch your death of cold!"

I looked back just long enough to answer that I *loved* to be soaked to my skin, and I was not afraid of catching the cold. All I wanted was that he did not catch me. But I did not say this part aloud. He called out something more, but I had got too far away to hear, for I was walking fast, and the rain made a loud, sweet sound, patterning on leaves. When I had looked back, I had seen something more than the figure of Mr. Caspian standing on the steps in his nice white flannel clothes: I had seen Molly and Jack and Mr. Storm. They were not on the side of the veranda I had come out on, but just round the corner, talking together in great earnest. I did not think they saw me; but you . . . ll know by and by!

I must have seemed like a mad one walking along with my head up in all that rain, as if I were out for my pleasure. But I did not care. I felt not to care for anything. It did not seem to matter what happened to me; I wished that I could take cold and die. I found a path under trees, winding up a beautiful high hill. On one side was rock, and I wished a large piece would fall on my head so I should never have to go back to the hotel. But that was selfish to Larry, for I could not bring him any money if I were dead!

I walked on and on, and the rain made my hair go in

little corkscrew curls over my eyes, and my thin dress stuck to my neck and arms like a skin, and I must have looked an object to scare the crows. I was cold, too, for there was a chill in the rain as if it had once been ice on some mountain-top, but I would not turn back. I was determined to wait a long time and be sure Mr. Caspian had gone in to his bridge. Then, I thought, I would find some side way into the hotel where I should not be seen.

As I walked up the path, I heard suddenly steps coming behind. I was afraid that after all Mr. Caspian had decided himself to follow. I thought he had perhaps put on a coat for the rain, and brought an umbrella to take me back, with my hand on his arm. Quick, I hurried to climb up to a terrace-place there was above that place in the path, with a lovely tree on it, almost like a tent. I think it is named the weeping ash. I sat very still underneath and I hoped the man might not look up; but I did not remember about my footprints in the wet earth stopping just there. I did not think of the footprints at all.

From where I sat, crouched down under the low tent of the little tree, I could see the head of a person coming. It was not the head of Mr. Caspian! It was a much higher head, and it wore the hat of Peter Storm. When I knew it was he, I wanted, oh, so much, to call out his name and tell him I was there. But I said to myself, "No, that would not be nice, my girl. He will guess you hid from Mr. Caspian, but that you did not wish to hide from *him*!" So I did not move. But he stopped and called my name. Then it was no harm to answer. Even the Sisters would say it would be rude if I did not! I looked out from under

the tree, and explained that I had come there to wait till the rain was not so much. On his part he explained that he had seen my footmarks come to an end on the path.

"I have brought you Mrs. Winston's umbrella," he said. "We saw you go away without one, so she sent me with hers. May I come up and help you down? The grass is slippery."

I did not need the help, but I said, "Yes, come." And as he came, the rain, which had not been so bad for some minutes, began to pour down in a torrent. Instead of falling in drops, it was like thick crystal rods.

"We had better wait," he said. "The umbrella won't be much good in this deluge." It would have been cruel not to ask him into my shelter, so I did; and it was too low for him to stand up. He had to sit down by my side. The rain came in a little, though the tree made a thick roof, and he put up the umbrella over my head. I told him he must come under it, too. We were close to each other, more close than we had been on the front seat of the car in the days when he drove with me by his side—closer than I had ever been with him except when we danced.

I looked up at him, and he looked down at me. "Poor little girl!" he said. "You are drenched!"

They were such simple words. Any one might have said them. But it was as if his eyes spoke quite different things. A light shone out of them into mine. And though I did not mean to do it, my eyes answered. I knew the most wonderful thing! I knew that he loved me not like a friend, but with a great, immense, fiery love. And I think he must have known that I loved him, for I couldn't help my eyes telling.

Oh, Adrienne, now the secret is out to you. I have loved him a long time, loved him *dreadfully*. I have felt as if he were *me*—as if I wasn't *there* till he had come. Do you understand? If you do not, you have not yet loved your cousin Marcel de Moncourt!

It seemed to me that never in my life before had I felt; and suddenly I was crying, as his eyes held mine to his. The next instant I was in his arms. It was not till then, I thought of my promise to another man. And to tell the truth, as I wish to do to you, it was two or three minutes or maybe more that I did not think.

Then I took my arms down from his neck (yes, I had put them there, as if I were in a dream, when his arms went round my waist and he kissed my cheek, all wet with cold rain and hot tears). It was only my cheek, because I turned my lips away, not out of goodness or because of being loyal to somebody else, I am afraid, but just because it seemed so great and wonderful to be in his arms I could bear no more.

"I forgot!" I said. "I forgot that I have given my word."

"I forgot, too," he said. "But now it is irrevocable. Your word can't stand. You love me, and nothing shall make me let you go. Don't you know that?"

I told him that if he loved me, I did not want to go. I was in the midst of saying that—though I did not want to—I must; but he interrupted to tell how he loved me. And, Adrienne, if I had never been happy for one single hour in my life till then, and could never be happy after, still I should have been glad I was born—yes, glad even if I lived to be an old, old woman with nothing of joy to

remember but that. If this is wicked, it cannot be helped.

I had to listen while he explained that he knew I couldn't care for Ed Caspian, and it was only to help Larry I had said yes. He went on, that he understood there must be money, for Larry's sake, and if he could get money, quite a good deal, would I marry him? Even if I wouldn't (he flashed out in a sudden, almost fierce way) he would never let Ed Caspian have me, because he was not worthy and it would be sacrilege. I said, if I were alone in the world I would marry for love if there was not a cent. But I must think for Larry, as Larry was like a boy, and by comparison I felt an old woman. That made Peter laugh, for the first time, but he did not laugh long. He begged me to trust him: that he knew how to get all Larry would need, and we would both look after him together as if we were old people and Larry our child. He said there were reasons why he could not have this money at once; at least, he could have it, but there were things to be done first. All he asked for himself, till the hour came, was my trust. But he wanted me to break off my engagement at once. After what had happened between us, he could not any longer bear it to go on.

If it had been that I could give Mr. Caspian back his ring, I would have agreed to do as Peter asked. Yet how could I say, "I will not marry you. But your ring you cannot have till I am married to another man and his money gets it from the Uncle?" Even less could I tell Peter about the Uncle, because he would blame poor Larry. It was dreadful to refuse Peter what he asked, but I had to refuse. I was afraid he would be angry and

despise me because I could not even explain why I would not break. But there he was wonderful. When he had thought for a moment, and looked at me as if he woul' read my soul, he said: "You must have some reason which seems to you very strong. I asked you to trust me, and now I'm going to trust *you*, though it hurts a good deal. It will be all the more of an incentive to me to make the way clear as soon as possible; and meanwhile I'm not going to spoil the best hour I have ever known."

I was a little afraid, when he said this, that he might think we could lose ourselves in love again; and he must have guessed what troubled me, for he spoke at once: "Don't worry" I know now you love me. That's all I want. Till you give me the right <sup>or</sup> something more, I'll stand where I stood half an hour ago, down on the ladder of friendship. But give me the rest of the hour here—if you trust me as I trust you."

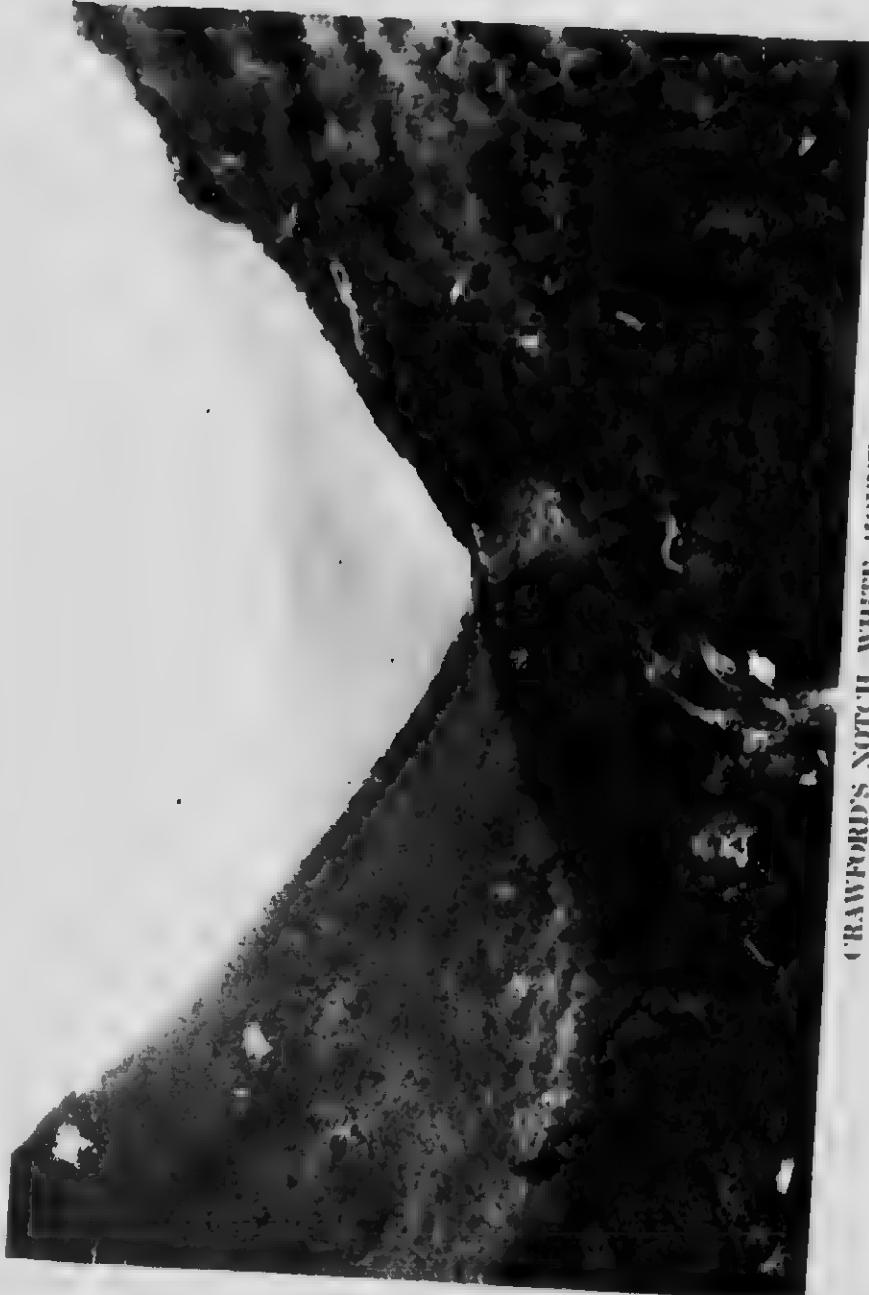
I was only too glad to consent. But the moment I agreed, he remembered that I was drenched, and said he would take me home. I had to give him my hot hand before he would believe I was warm as if sitting by a stove.

Oh, the glorious half-hour that followed! I cannot express to you, Adrienne, the joy of it. We spoke no more of love. We did not touch each other. But we knew. And the rain, which had come down for a few minutes in that great flood, stopped, to let the sun shine out. I never saw the world so marvellous as then. The lovely things sparkling bright all around where we looked put ideas of beauty in our heads, so we spoke about them, not about ourselves. Just to be there together, that was all. You cannot think what a pleasure only to talk of

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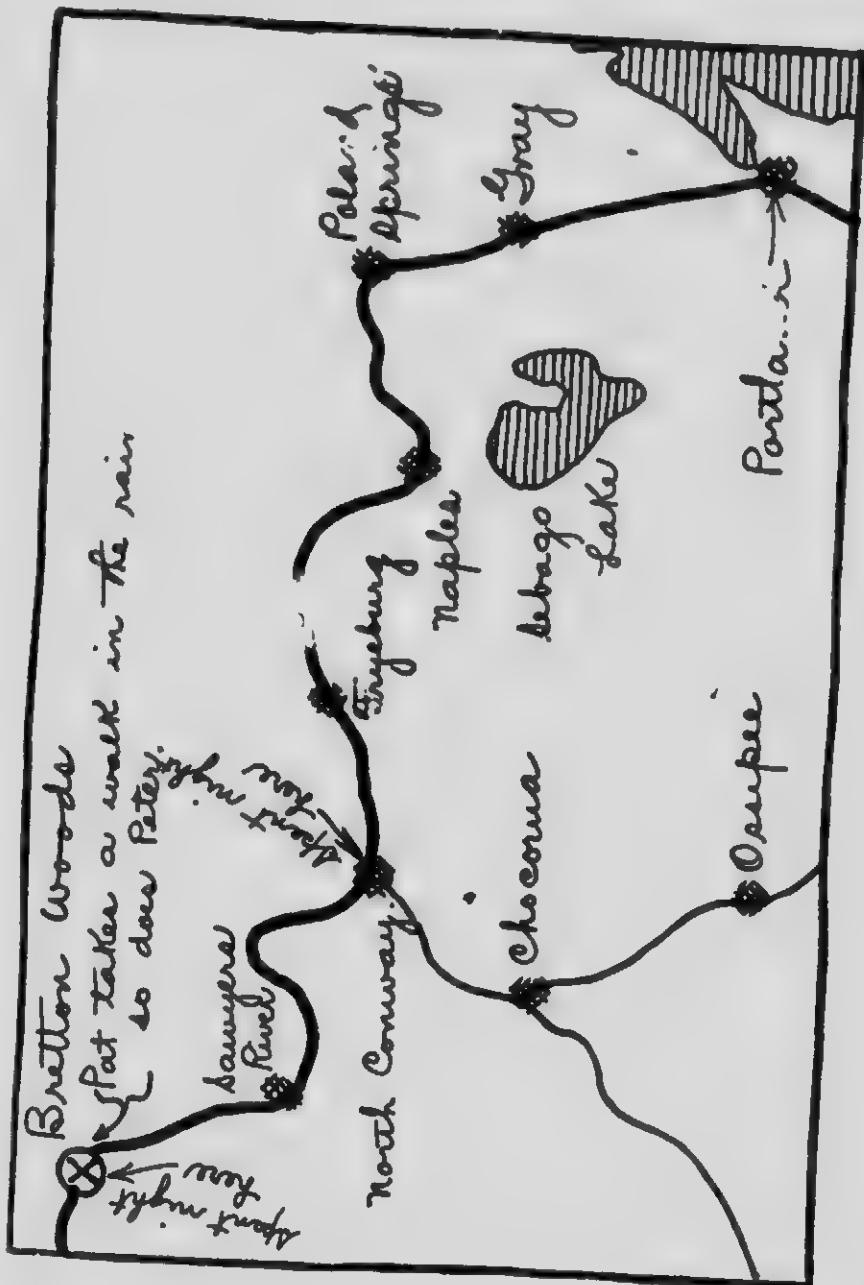
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RAWFORD'S NOTCH, WHITE MOUNTAINS







*trees!* And it seemed they were listening. They laughed and clapped their little hands.

It is Molly who says always that trees are alive, like us. These woods of the White Mountains she calls the woods of Fairies. Now we saw well it was the truth. They looked quite different woods from others. Even the sunshine was a different colour, and shades of colour. You see, the woods are not old, but young: baby birches, and baby maples, and their big brothers not yet turning darker green. In the sun all was gold of many tints. Peter and I could see a flickering light, like a net of pale, pale gold, trail across the amber-coloured leaves of spring. Peter said, "The spirit of the woods has bare shoulders, sunburned brown, and her gold hair blows over them." I said, "The trunks of the littlest birches are sticks of her broken ivory fan she has planted in the ground, and the tall ones are masts of buried ships, bleached white in the moonlight." We were a chorus to praise the Nature; but if our tree had been a cell of prison, we should have said, "the bars are beautiful."

It was such a dear, kind tree, my Adrienne! Peter made us both pretend that we could remember when we had been trees, live creatures, living in lovely houses—the houses which were ourselves. We had our concert rooms where the birds sang to us. We had our menageries of trained squirrels. We lived very long, and always we were young and of great beauty. We slept in the time of winter to dream of the summer days, and then we remembered the history of birds and men we had seen making—all the things that, now we are people, we have to read in books. No words of the love did we speak after those

first minutes of surprise, but we could have sat forever, not tiring of our talk.

At last I had to say, "Now we *must* go!" And Peter did not keep me. We shook hands like the friends. And then the divine hour was over, except in memory. There it will always live for me. I can always call it back, with every word and look, even if things do not come right for us, as Peter thinks they will.

I wish, oh, *how* I wish, I could be as sure as he seems to be! But I cannot help telling myself that perhaps, as he is used to being poor, he does not realize how much money Larry needs.

It has done me good to write to you of this, my Adrienne, for love is coming to you, too, even if it has not yet come as it has to me.

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## XXIX

### MOLLY WINSTON TO MERCEDES LANE

DEAREST MERCEDES:

*Awepesha, Long Island.*

I haven't written to you since Bretton Woods, because the little details of our travels might have seemed an aggravation while I kept the *Secret* up my sleeve, and had no particular personal news with which to embroider the story of the days. Now, it's different. I can't tell you the *Secret* yet, it's true; but there's some rather big news—news which brought us all back to Long Island in a hurry after Great Barrington. I'm debating with myself whether to blurt it out now, or to lead up to it gradually. I'll ask Jack's advice!

I have asked, and Jack says, "I think Monty and Mercédes would rather finish our travels with us, and see the things that happened as we saw them, instead of being made to play Providence and reach the end before it arrives."

So I'll take his word for it, and begin where I left off at Bretton Woods, only hurrying on, perhaps, a little faster than I should if there were no bombshell to explode later.

We didn't hurry our journey, however. No presenti-

ment warned us of what was to come. We stayed two days at Bretton Woods, and adored the place. Fancy drinking water from a spring at Mount Echo! The name turned water into champagne. And fancy having nice college boys disguised as waiters, to serve us, and earn enough for next winter's course! It rained one day, but the downpour was a blessing in disguise for it drew Peter and Pat nearer together and wove a spun-glass barrier between the girl and Caspian. She ran out in a torrent to get rid of the inevitable Ed, who discreetly retired in fear of a drenching; then, when his back was safely turned, I sent Peter Storm after her with an umbrella. Jack and I were still on the veranda when the two came back an hour and a half later. The rain had stopped. Danae's shower of gold had been scattered over the woods in a sunburst. But even the joyousness of nature was hardly enough to account for the look on their faces. I hoped to hear that night or next day that the unnatural engagement with Ed Caspian was "off." There I was disappointed. Not a word was said either by the girl or the man; yet *something* happened during that walk in the rain, I was still sure. Both were different afterward, in a way too subtle to define. But *nothing* is too subtle to feel!

The night after starting on again we stopped at Lake Sunapee in New Hampshire, and the day's run getting there was just as astonishing as the run which brought us to Bretton Woods. We saw the glories of Franconia Notch. We saw the Great Stone Profile, which influenced Hawthorne's life. I heard people speaking of it as the profile of an "old man," but to Jack's eyes and mine it

was young with eternal youth, the youth of the gods. It gave us the same mysterious thrill that the Sphinx gives; and its gaze, reading what sky and mountains, cathedral forests and rushing rivers have to tell, holds the same Secret that's in the stone eyes looking over the desert.

There are some charming Indian legends in these mountains where the Profile reigns as king. One is the story of an immense carbuncle, the biggest jewel in the world, which hangs suspended from a rock over a hidden pool that reflects its fire. It's guarded by an evil spirit, but when the day comes for it to be found, the god of the Profile will put the knowledge of its whereabouts into the mind of a man. At the same time strength will come to that man to overcome the wicked guardian, and win the jewel. How I wish the Profile had taken a fancy to Jack! I'm sure there couldn't be a better modern St. George. Alas, however, no flash of divination came to him, and the only supernatural adventure we had in these faun and fairy haunted woods was to catch a glimpse of the White Doe of the mountains which appears to travellers now and then, bringing them good luck. Of course *some* people would say it was just an ordinary, *café-au-lait*-coloured deer, with the sun shining on it to make it look white; because there are still deer in mountains: but you and Monty wouldn't be so banal!

We saw lakes and forests, dark, impenetrable pines, and baby woods of white and gold and palest green; rivers and brooks that are cousins to the brooks and rivers of Scotland; rocks like enchanted elephants lying down fast asleep in surging foam, and green pools clear as glass to their pearl-stored depths. The Flume, in

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its different way, was as memorable as the Great Stone Face. So flashing white was the swift water it seemed to send out troops of flying spirits which vanished as we looked, or else crossed on a bridge of rainbow to the blue mountains that walled the distance.

Sunapee has a river and a lake, and our hotel was great fun, with a dining-room which pretended to be a glorified log cabin. Next day we had lost the superlative beauty of the mountains. It was just very pretty country, where the mountains sent the baby foothills to play and sun themselves. By and by, however, the Green Mountains began to float before us, not in the least green, but darkly blue against the pale-blue sky, like background mountains in Stained-Glass-Window Land; and Vermont opened adorably. The door of the State was set in a wall of beautiful forests, wild forests which might have been discovered by us for the first time if a great suspension bridge hadn't given away the story of civilization. The mountains pretended to be wild also, though they were low and softly wooded. But along our roadside lay piles of good-smelling, newly sawn wood, which we feared that men, not brownies, had placed there; and now and then we passed, in the midst of apparent wilderness, a mild-looking elderly farmhouse.

Towns had a way of appearing where we least expected to see them; Chester, for instance, which had nothing to lead up to it. (But there was a delicious luncheon in it!) And the instant we had passed out from its street of stately trees we were deep in the country again. I don't know why Vermont should have the greenest grass and trees in the world, and more varieties of wild flowers

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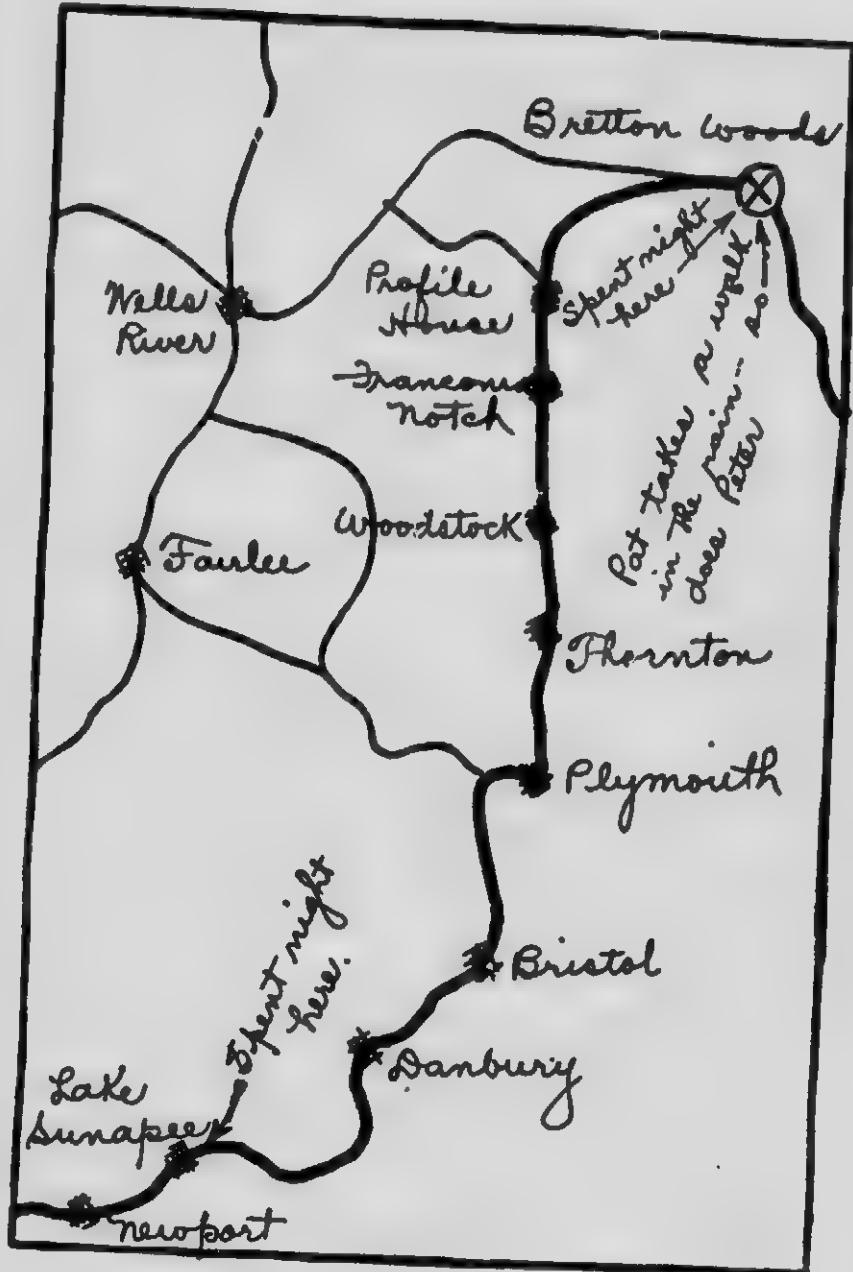
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"I shall always think of Vermont as the State of wild lawns and gardens"







growing in thick borders by brooks and roadsides. Yet really it does seem to be so! I shall always think of Vermont as the State of wild lawns and gardens.

Did you ever see what they call the "jewel flower?" I saw it for the first time in Vermont: a delicate little yellow bell of a thing; but its stem is a magician. Dip it in water, and in a few minutes it will have collected enough solid-looking pearls for a necklace. It was Peter who knew this, and told Pat, whereupon she had the Grayles-Grice stopped for an experiment, and the whole procession halted. The brook proved the truth of Peter's statement. It's extraordinary the country as well as town lore Peter has! At least I wondered at it, until I heard something of what his adventurous life has been.

If we discovered one new flower that day, we discovered dozens; new to Jack and me, I mean: tall, rose-red ones like geraniums, of which the country people couldn't tell the names; purple ones like plumes; white ones like blond bluebells; and others that looked like nothing but themselves. All the old friends were there, too: wild roses, honeysuckle, convolvulus, growing in the midst of feathery ferns and young-gold bracken. Never did any earthly gardener plant with such an eye to colour as the planting of what Vermont farmers call their "wild lots." There were apple trees, very big and of strange, dancing shapes, almost like the olives of Italy; and after we had left the garden country for a country of hills with steep gradients, we came to "maple-sugar country." (I shall send you a box of that maple sugar, which we bought at a pretty little place named Peru. But I'm afraid it's last year's.)

Despite their steepness the roads were well made, humping themselves up very high, and then sinking comfortably down into what they call "water breaks" or "thank you, ma'ams!" I'd often heard that last expression; but being English, Jack had to have it explained to him that the horse was supposed to rest there a minute and give thanks for the respite from pulling.

It will make you feel as if I'd rubbed a file across your front teeth, my dear, when I tell you that we shot out of maple-sugar country into marble country. But isn't that better than mixing them up together? The marble's very pretty, and you don't have to eat it. You walk on it, when you come to Manchester-in-the-Mountains. Before you get there, though, you see many other mountains, which don't belong to Manchester. They are bold and big enough to be named Ben Something or Other if they were in Scotland; but this is such a country of mountains you know—White, F... and Green—that they don't get grand titles conferred on them unless they're beyond the average.

Manchester-in-the-Mountains is called the "City of Marble Pavements," which makes you feel, before you see it, as if you were coming to Rome after it was improved by Augustus Cæsar. But it is really a perfectly beautiful village, whose highroad is the main street, and at the same time a cathedral-aisle of elms. They paved it with marble only because there's so much marble about they don't know what to do with it all—unless they give it away with a pound of tea. We stayed all night in the nicest country hotel Jack and I ever saw in our lives. It's named after a neighbouring mountain; and I think

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it must have been made by throwing several colonial houses together and building bits in between. The rooms give circumstantial evidence for this theory, too, for there are labyrinths of drawing-rooms and parlours and boudoirs and libraries, with a step or two up, or a step or two down, to get in. It's chintzy and cozy and old-fashioned looking, yet really it's up to or ahead of date. As for the people who stay there, GOLF is written all over them, for the great attraction of the place is one of the best golf courses in the United States.

We both felt that we were being cruelly torn away when we had to "move on" again next morning, but we are always pretty soon resigned to being in a car again, you know! I feel so deliciously irresponsible the minute I start off, like a parcel being sent to some nice destination by post. I can't understand any one *not* feeling that a motor is as companionable as a horse, can you? It has so many interesting moods, and one's relation with the dear thing—if it belongs to one—gets to be so perfect!

Besides the joy of the car, we found the Green Mountains particularly lovable, not large, but of endearing shapes. We should have liked to have them for pets. Yet the pet aspect is only one of many. They have grand aspects, too. They've inspired poets, and given courage to soldiers. Yesterday we had thought Vermont all made of gardens. To-day it was made of mountains, mountains everywhere the eyes turned. And wherever there was a place to nestle an exquisite farmhouse did nestle. I used to think that England had the monopoly of beautiful farmhouses, but these Vermont ones, though as different as a birch from an oak, are just as perfect. Even

Jack, whose every drop of blood is English and Scottish, admitted this.

They're white and of simple lines, with a rich green background of woods. In front there are lawns with lots of flowers growing as they please, and ferns left to do as they like if they don't interfere with other people; on both sides generous meadows stretching far away. Jack said: "What a warm glow the thought of such a home must bring to the heart of a boy when he's out for the battle of life! And what a place to come back to at Christmas!"

"Or Thanksgiving," said I. But "Thanksgiving" suggests no picture to Jack as it does to you and me. Our cranberry sauce in England is always a failure, not thick or sweet enough; and the poor fellow has *never tasted pumpkin pie!* If one of them came into his life, he would probably address it as it is spelt; and what self-respecting pumpkin pie would be luscious unless it were pronounced "punkin?"

"Anyhow, I give Vermont a star," he murmured, with the look of pinning a V. C. onto a mountain's breast. And he did that just in time, for the mountains were receding into the background, taking hands in a ring round wide woodlands.

By way of the pretty toy town Arlington we came to Bennington, which is the heart of history for Vermont. The man for whom it was named was granted the first township in the wild lands known as "the Wilderness" then. But it must have been a beautiful wilderness, for the British soldiers of those pre-Revolutionary days used to fall in love with it as they marched through, and promise themselves that they would come back and build homes. They did come back and build the homes, and the "prom-

ised land" was so attractive that New York wanted to take it away by writ of ejectment. The Vermonters decided to fight for their rights under Ethan Allen, and thus "The Green Mountain Boys" came into existence as a famous band. The bronze catamount which still grins defiance toward New York from the top of its tall pedestal makes that day seem yesterday!

There's a great monument also, to the battle which made Bennington's glory, but the most *humanly* interesting thing in town—for us—was the old Robinson house. Such a darling house, with a heavenly door and scalloped white picket fence. You would love it! And it's turned itself into a kind of glorified curiosity shop, as so many of the charming old houses of New England have done. You feel you must go in to see what these lovely houses are like inside; and the first thing you know, you are buying Queen Anne mirrors, japanned trays, braided mats, and even serpentine fronted bureaux, which you don't know what to do with but die rather than do without!

Everything else that we saw was a "star" place after that, for we were coming back into Massachusetts, and to the Berkshire Hills which Thoreau loved, and Hawthorne, and Longfellow, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Williamstown is as celebrated in its smaller way as Harvard or Yale, for a university's fame needn't consist in size, I suppose! I hardly ever saw a place where every building was so perfectly suited to every other building, without one jarring note; and though it's more important than a village now, the lovely description Hawthorne wrote suits the town as well as ever. He said: "I had a view of Williamstown from Greylock summit: a white village and a steeple

in a gradual hollow, with huge mountain swells heaving up, like immense subsiding waves far and near around it."

Do you remember "Ethan Brand" and "The Unpardonable Sin?" I hadn't realized till Jack reminded me, as we looked up to "Old Greylock," that the lime kiln was there. I'm going to read Hawthorne all over again now—when I have time!

"Greylock" was the translated name of a brave Indian chief who used to fight with the French against the English. I wonder what he would say nowadays when they are Allies? If he were as intelligent as his mountain is beautiful, he'd be glad.

The Berkshire Hills are the small brothers of the Green Mountains, for they are all of the same family, but they have their own characteristics. It seems as if the men who engineered the wonderful roads must have loved the hills and planned each mile of the way so as to show off some favourite feature. For instance, you could never for a minute miss Greylock's long, dove-coloured streak which justifies his name!

If Williamstown is the gate of the Berkshires, Pittsfield is their heart; and so it's right that the place should be the literary landmark it is. Longfellow came on his honeymoon to the "hill city," and wrote the "Old Clock on the Stairs" in the very house where the clock was—and is now. South Mountain is close by, where "Elsie Venner" scenes were laid; and "Elsie's" author lived for years at a place between Pittsfield and Lenox. It's still there, and is called "Holmesdale."

We spoke of staying at Pittsfield all night, just because

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"We found the Green Mountains particularly lovable"



it's lovely; but we arrived so early that Caspian and Mrs. Shuster wanted to go on to Great Barrington, where we had planned to stop. They said they expected letters. "Shall we thwart them?" Jack asked me mischievously. I murmured that it was a "toss up," so we did go on—which was a good thing, as it turned out.

Pittsfield *ought* to have been stopped in, for it is a dream of beauty, and so is Lenox. Stockbridge seemed just as charming—almost more to me, for Hawthorne lived there, in a "little red house with green shutters," on the shore of Stockbridge Bowl. We had followed him about from place to place, but there we had to leave him at last, writing "*The House of the Seven Gables.*"

Then, always running along the most perfect road, we came to Great Barrington, Bryant's home. We couldn't escape the romancers and the poets if we'd wished, for it was *their* country. It was late by this time, and we were hungry and dusty. I didn't expect letters, and felt inclined to wish we had lingered farther back. Here there would be a rush to bathe and dress before a decent dinner hour: and it looked such a smart hotel!

"I believe, now I come to think of it, that I asked to have letters forwarded to me from Kidd's Pines," remarked Larry, as we all walked into the big hall. "They'll be the first I've had—if there are any. I put them off till the last minute! I didn't want the beastly things to look forward to on getting home."

I hardly listened. The hotel seemed full, and I was wondering if Jack could get me a room with a bath. Pat and I and the Goodrich goddesses grouped together, waiting to hear our luck as to quarters, when Larry came to us,

looking rather dazed. He had some letters in his hand, and an open telegram.

"This has been waiting for me all day," he said in a queer voice, and held out the telegram to Pat. I felt a little frightened. But nobody we loved could be dead!

"Oh, Molly!" the girl cried. "Kidd's Pines has had a fire. It is partly burnt down. All the people have had to go away. That means my life is over!"

The last words broke from her in such a tone of despair that I was startled. It was grievous that damage should have come to the dear old house. But why should she say her "life was over?" I asked myself the question; but suddenly the answer seemed to come, like a whisper in my ear:

"She thinks it means ruin. If she hoped to break off with Caspian in spite of everything, and marry Peter, she feels that hope is over."

There was no chance of a private word with Pat then or afterward. The news ran like wildfire. All the men came and crowded round us, consoling or giving advice. Jack was the most sensible.

"Let's see when the next train starts," he said. "You and I, Molly, will go with Moore and Pat; and they must stop with us at Awepesha. The others, of course, can do as they like."

It ended in the whole party taking the train, for every one was anxious for one reason or other. The bride and bridegroom and the Goodriches had left things they valued at Kidd's Pines. Caspian and Mrs. Shuster felt that where the Moores went, there they ought to go also. As for the Boys, they would have followed Pat to the death.





Well, we got off, at the cost of dinner. But most of us had forgotten that we were hungry. The cars were simply abandoned for the time being, in garage. They were to be "sent for," like boys and girls at a children's dance.

You can imagine that, by the time we had got to New York, and from New York to Long Island, it was a witching hour of the night! Nobody cared, however. All our thoughts were centred at Kidd's Pines. I kept Pat close to me in the train, and once in a while Peter hovered near, as if he longed for a chance to say something. But Pat could not or would not talk, either to him or me. She had a headache, and sat with her eyes shut, looking pitifully pale. Larry, on the contrary, was all excitement, and never stopped jabbering with one person or another till the end of the journey. I could have boxed his ears.

Well, when at last we arrived, the damage wasn't as bad as we expected, for the fire had started by day. Wasn't it sickening, a woman (one of Kidd's Pines' "paying guests") had upset a lot of alcohol from a spirit lamp. That was the way it began. And she didn't give the alarm at first: she was afraid of the consequences to herself, and she and her maid tried to put the fire out. Of course the room got thoroughly alight before anything was properly done. One wing of the house is half in ruins. Nothing else is hurt much, except by water. But, as the telegram said, every one cleared out, as rats leaving a sinking ship. And would you believe it, there is no insurance! How like Larry!

I've been trying to forget my worries for a while, writing this long letter to you, and leaving the worst for the last. But really, I don't know what is to be done about Larry

and Pat. If it weren't for what Peter Storm told me at Wenham in Aunt Mary's garret, I—oh, I mustn't tread on that ground, though! I forgot that the time limit isn't up.

Pat and Larry wouldn't come to stay with us after all. Their rooms were not hurt, and they wanted to stop at home. Caspian and Mrs. S. are there, too. I wish they weren't. But I hear that C—— is soon starting for New York on business. I hope to goodness it's true! Peter also had to go there this morning, by the earliest train—a milk train or an egg train or something, and there won't be any news worth having until to-morrow, I suppose. This is only the morning after our night rush from Great Barrington. I hardly slept, and neither did Jack, but we are both keyed up with excitement, guessing why Peter Storm is in New York. I don't know just when he can get back, or whether he'll come here, or go straight to Kidd's Pines—or to his lodgings. But Jack and I shall motor over early in the old car this afternoon to see how dear Patsey gets on. I'll post this, and write you again the minute I have something to tell.

Ever Your

MOLLY.

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EDWARD CASPIAN TO DANIEL WINTERTON

*Great Barrington, Mass.*

SIR:

I thank you for your telegram and letter which I have just found, and am answering in haste, as I am starting almost at once for Long Island by train. News has come by wire that there has been a fire at Kidd's Pines, causing considerable destruction, and the trip ends suddenly a couple of days sooner than it should have done. I am much interested in your news and the information you have picked up. No doubt I shall want the person you mention who knows Moncourt Junior to come to Kidd's Pines within the next few days, as soon as things are more settled there. I will then manage to have "Storm" on the spot, as you suggest, and we shall see the effect of the surprise. If an arrest can follow, so much the better. Men of his stamp are enemies of society. You have my full permission to communicate with the regular police, who will be glad of this chance put into their way, whether they choose to give us credit or not. Suspicion was hushed up by the family and the doctors, but it was certainly suggested that young Moncourt caused the death of my distant cousin Stanislaus, and robbed him of valuables which he was known to keep in his bedroom. There was no account of these things when

I inherited; but as I could get nobody to come forward and swear to their existence, much less give a description, I let the matter drop.

I have resolved to buy the Stanislaws' house on Long Island, as to which I hesitated when I wrote you last. Another communication has informed me that I must give an answer at once, or the place will pass into other hands. My fiancée, Miss Moore, admired the house when our party spent several nights there some time ago, and I may decide to give her the place as a wedding present. I must go to New York from Kidd's Pines to-morrow morning, and fix this business up. I will call on you at your office at five o'clock P. M. for a consultation, and should be glad if you would secure the presence of Stanislaws' old valet whom you have discovered. I should like to talk to him before he comes with me to Kidd's Pines.

Yours truly,

E. CASPIAN.

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## XXXI

### MOLLY WINSTON TO MERCEDES LANE

DEAREST:

*Awepesha.*

I promised to write again soon, but there isn't yet the news I hoped to tell. Indeed, I'm a little depressed and worried, though I've nailed my flag of faith to the mast of the "Stormy Petrel!"

You shall know just what has happened.

I think I wrote you that Peter went to New York early the morning after our night rush from Great Barrington to Long Island. I took it for granted that his business there concerned the revelation he made to me in Aunt Mary's garret; but he had no time, and perhaps no inclination, to enter into details. He just said, "I'm off, and I hope everything will go well. I shall get back to my 'diggings,' and see you either at Awepesha or Kidd's Pines the minute I can finish up."

Caspian hung about till Peter was safely away, and then put in as much deadly work as possible before leaving for New York. He was nice (as nice as he knows how to be) to Larry and Pat, and bucked them up about Kidd's Pines. That was the proper thing; but was it proper, or was it simply Caspian-esque, to tell Patty at such a moment that he'd bought the beautiful Stanislaws house I wrote you about, as a present for her? Of course he

mentioned the sum he was paying for it—a whacking one. He wouldn't be Caspian if he hadn't boasted!

I happened to be at Kidd's Pines when he was making this dramatic announcement. (I told you Jack and I were motoring over in the old car, but we went earlier than we expected, because just as I had finished your letter Patsey 'phoned to ask us for a "picnic luncheon in the burnt-up house.")

Caspian was telephoning like mad when we arrived, and only finished just as luncheon was ready, which gave him an excuse for letting his left hand, to say nothing of both feet, know what his right hand had been doing. I suppose he was afraid, if Jack and I were left to hear the news from Pat, a little of the gilt might be off the gingerbread. So he launched his own thunderbolt as we sat down at the table: Larry, Pat, Mrs. Shuster, Jack, and I.

I was so flabbergasted that I can't remember his words. But they were those of the noble, misunderstood hero of melodrama to his ungrateful sweetheart and her ruined father who have never appreciated his sterling worth. He let them jolly well know, and rubbed it in, that he would *never* have spent such an enormous sum on anything for himself: that indeed, though he *ought* to have received the Stanislaws house as an inheritance, he had abandoned all idea of possessing it until Pat expressed intense admiration for the place. With this incentive, the moment they were engaged he had begun negotiations. The price asked was so outrageous, however, that he was on the point of refusing when misfortune fell upon Kidd's Pines. It would now be impossible to continue living

there in comfort for the present, so he (Caspian) had spent his morning in fixing up by 'phone the business of purchase. Of course he would have to go to New York, and see Mr. Strickland, who had the matter in hand. Indeed, he intended to start directly after luncheon; but he could not bear to go without relieving the family mind of its anxieties.

Poor little Pat was scarlet, and her eyes were—I was going to say like saucers, but I think they were more like large, expressive pansies. "Oh, you *shouldn't* have done that for me!" she exclaimed. "Of course, I'm grateful, and it was ver-r-y good of you, but—"

"Didn't you say you would *love* to live in that house?" Caspian cross-questioned her over a pickle. (He's disgustingly fond of pickles: makes a beast of himself on pickles!)

"Yes, I suppose I did," Patsey admitted; and got out a "but" again, but not a word further.

"Very well. That was enough for me. I wanted to prove that I was going to stand by you now, in every way, and I hope this is as big a proof as a man can give," said the noble saviour of the situation. "We must marry as soon as possible, of course. I'll get the license to-day. And then you can have your wish. You shall live in the Stanislaws house, and when your father and Mrs. Shuster get back from their honeymoon you can write them to visit us, and stay as long as they like."

Pat, as pale as she had been red, stammered confused thanks for his thoughtfulness. How could the girl, when he'd just announced the expenditure of five hundred thousand dollars for her *beaux yeux*, tell him not by any means to get the license?

I was sickeningly sorry for her. I knew exactly how she felt. As for me, I had rush of luncheon to the head, a frightful effect, considering that I'd just eaten a soft-shelled crab. With the little I knew of affairs between them I was still instinctively sure that Pat and the Stormy Petrel had come to some sort of a vague understanding the day of rain at Bretton Woods. I thought that the rain had melted down the wall between the two, and Peter had prematurely said more than he meant to say, perhaps begging her to break off with Caspian. Evidently she had refused (for Larry's sake), but had very likely hoped that somehow Peter would step in and *save* her before it was too late.

Now, all of a sudden, it *was* too late! And Peter wasn't even near. I could imagine the child's despair, with the present of a five-hundred-thousand-dollar house flung at her head—a house which would be "no use" to her fiancé if it were not to be shared with her. Even knowing what I knew, I feared that the situation might become serious, more because of Peter's absence than anything else.

As soon as we finished luncheon and Caspian was saying good-bye to Pat (decorously in the presence of Larry, from whom she refused to be detached), I asked Jack what he thought. "If only we knew where to get at Peter in New York!" I wailed. "I'm afraid the girl will be *married* to that creature before Peter comes back; and then nothing will be of any use."

"We mustn't let that happen," said Jack. "Not that I believe Storm has turned his back without thinking of every contingency. And he must know about the sale."

"He didn't mention it when he told me the story," I said. "Not a word about the Stanislaws house!"

"Probably it didn't strike him as important in that connection," Jack argued; and I accepted the deduction; but I was far from comfortable and my peace of mind was not restored by a conversation I snatched with Pat when Caspian had gone. I begged her to do nothing rash, in a moment of generous impulse; but she exclaimed, "It is others who seem to have the generous impulses! I cannot afford to be generous. But dear Molly, I must be just. And now everything is against Larry and me. We must go where the tide takes us."

She didn't use as flowery language as that, but it's difficult to quote Patty in the vernacular.

Well, we crawled home after a while, Jack and I. And nothing more happened that day, except that Pat 'phoned me from her ruinous home about nine o'clock in the evening, to say "Mistaire" Caspian had come back. He had bought the Stanislaws house and paid for it, but she had refused to accept the gift. "It must be *his*, not mine," she said. "I understand that he would not have bought it except for my sake, so already I owe him a big debt of gratitude. I will not owe him more. It is now too much."

"Did he get the license?" I tremblingly ventured to inquire.

"Yes," Pat answered. But when I hurried on to the next question, "Have you fixed a date?" silence was my answer. She had dropped the receiver, and I was afraid I could guess why. She couldn't bear to discuss the sword hanging over her head. Few descendants of Damocles can!

All that was yesterday. I've waited to-day to write you in the hope of having something new to tell. But it's now ten o'clock p. m. and there is nothing good; rather the contrary. Pat has almost if not quite promised to marry Ed Caspian at the end of the week, Saturday, and Mrs. Shuster has hinted at her willingness to become Mrs. Moore on the same day. The knots are to be tied (devil permitting) very quietly, at home, in the water-logged drawing-room at Kidd's Pines. My pleadings to Pat of no avail. The combination of pawned rings, debts, five-hundred-thousand-dollar houses, etc., and *Peter's absence at the crucial moment* is too strong for her. As for Larry, he seems to be as hopeless as his daughter. I fancy from a chance word which Pat *inadvertently* let drop that, with the prospect of a millionaire son-in-law, Larry desperately attempted to free himself, but Mrs. Shuster "persuaded" him to stick to his bargain. How she managed I don't know, but there are lots of ways, and Larry with all his faults is a gentleman. He even has a chivalrous vein which, though lying deep under selfishness, crops up near the surface occasionally. I wish he'd been chivalrous with his daughter, while there was time for it to do good, instead of at the last moment with this silly middle-aged woman who wants to get "into society" through him.

Oh, just one other thing which I nearly forgot to mention! At my urgent suggestion Jack wrote a line to Peter Storm, in care of a man named James Strickland, said by Caspian to have looked after the interests of a family with whom Peter is connected. He's a well-known lawyer, so we easily found his address in the New York directory. He

has his office there, of course, though I believe he has a house somewhere on Long Island, I don't know where. There's just the merest chance that Peter Storm may go to him in New York. He's going to *some* lawyer, so why not Strickland? Anyhow, we have no other means of getting at this extremely Stormy Petrel until his return. May it not be put off too long!

Jack, like all other men, hated to interfere, for P. S. has never spoken to either of us, in so many words, of his "intentions" toward Patty Moore. But I cooked up a specious-sounding note, saying that, if Peter didn't want Caspian to complicate matters for everybody, he had better hurry up and come back before C— was actually married.

That letter went off by special delivery this morning.  
Au revoir, till I can give you the sequel!

Your battered but not yet broken

MOLLY.

## XXXII

### MOLLY WINSTON TO MERCÉDES LANE

*Awepesha.*

#### MERCÉDES MINE:

Hurrah! There's a thing I may tell you without giving away Peter's confidences till the cat's ready to jump from the bag.

Jack and I were restless last evening. When I finished my letter to you, it was only half-past ten; and I felt as if I could jump up and down and scream.

"If I don't do *something*, I shall have a conniption fit!" I threatened.

Jack doesn't know what a conniption fit is, not having been brought up in an American nursery, but lest it might be something appalling, he asked how I should like to go out in the car for a short spin. By this time Hiawatha had been brought home by our chauffeur; and the moon was soon due to rise, so it seemed an attractive prospect that Jack held out.

"I'll tell you what let's do!" said I. "Go over to Patty's. If there's a light in the drawing-room windows we'll ring. If not, we'll just spin round outside the wall to the side gate, and go into the grounds for a look at the moon from the Point of the Pines."

In fifteen minutes we were off. And as I've told you, it's only a short spin to Kidd's Pines. There was a light in

the drawing-room, so we did ring, and Pat was thankful for the excuse to get out of doors. Larry had gone to town—on "business," he had said, and Mrs. Shuster was sulking as if she doubted the statement. The Boys had been over from some weird inn, not far off, where they are lurking now, in order to rally round their goddess, but luckily Pat had sent them away just before we arrived. They would have been too noisy to please the moon! Patsey had been playing the piano at Mrs. Shuster's request, while the latter forlornly knitted impossible socks for Brobdinag-footed soldiers.

Of course we politely asked Mrs. S. to join our expedition, at the same time intensely willing her to refuse. Will prevailed. Mrs. Shuster said she "must write to the poor dear Senator, and send him good wishes for a lecture he is to deliver in New York." So she was disposed of; and we three went out into the fragrant night. I suppose she calls her Senator "poor dear" as a delicate way of letting us guess that she has refused him.

Have I told you about the Point of the Pines, I wonder? I feel sure I must have done so. The Pines are those under which Captain Kidd is supposed to have buried some of his treasure—the pines which have given the place its name. There is a narrow slip of land on which the principal members of this pine family grow. Instead of stretching straight out into the water, it curves toward the lawn, as if the back of your hand and your four fingers composed the lawn, and your thumb, slightly but not far extended, were the Point of the Pines. There are only a few trees, for the Point is small; they're seven in number and they reach beautifully toward the Sound, like running

dryads holding out eager arms to the sea. They aren't ordinary pines, such as you may see almost anywhere on Long Island, but are of the "umbrella" sort, like those of Italy, just as beautiful if not nearly so large as those at Rome in the Pincian gardens, or at Naples, where their branches seem sketched in straight, horizontal black lines against the blue background of sea and sky. Shelter Island has one such pine, under which also Captain Kidd is supposed to have deposited a sample of treasure. I think there are no more in our part of the world.

Well, you can imagine that it's wonderful to sit by the water, lapping and whispering as it mumbles to the shore with toothless baby mouths; to sit there and wait for the moon to come up behind those dark umbrella pines.

None of us three felt like talking. There wasn't much to say which interested us just then, and at the same time went well with the exquisite romance of the place. Besides, it was lovely to listen to the water.

We grouped together, sitting on the grass, Jack with his back against a big chestnut tree, I leaning against his shoulder, and Patsey reclining, with her elbow in my lap. Far away a clock musically struck the half-hour after eleven, and as the sound died away a creamy light began to run along the sky. We sat very still, knowing what was coming to pass. In a minute more we saw a ruddy rim rise out of purple dusk; and with that almost incredible quickness in which the miracle is accomplished, the whole moon was up, red and slightly concave, for it was past the full.

Then the thing we had come out to see, happened. We saw the molten lamp directly behind the biggest of the

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seven pines out on the Point. The tree, black as ink, looked suddenly like a gigantic suit of armour, with an immense heart-shaped jewel—perhaps that magic carbuncle from the hidden pool of the White Mountains—suspended in its breast.

While we looked something else happened: a small rowboat with a man in it skimmed into sight, and slowed down at the Point of the Pines. Silent as a water bird it glided into the tiny cove between the point and the wide stretch of lawn, stopping dead under the moon-illumined tree.

By common consent we were as still as statues. Where we sat at a distance from the shore, and under the big chestnut, we were invisible to the man in the boat. We thought we should see him climb onto the bank, where his figure would be silhouetted against the moonlight; but he didn't appear.

"Perhaps it's a rendezvous of sweethearts," I whispered. "Presently another boat will come with the girl."

"Perhaps," Patsey whispered back. "Yes, it must be that. There is nothing he can do with the cave."

"Cave!" echoed Jack, interested as a boy. "Is there a cave?"

"It is only a little one," said Pat. "Not a nice cave. I have been in it when I was small. One gets there if one slides down a bank from the Point, just as well as from the water. I would run away from my nurse, and she would scold and call out, but she would not come after me, because it is a very low roof. To get to the very end, one must go on the hands and knees, but I liked that the best of all. I tried to find the treasure of Captain Kidd, which

Larry told me about. But that was only a child's thought. He would *never* have hidden it where one had only to push through some bushes, then to crawl in and pull it out."

"No," said Jack, who had never put much faith in the treasure's tale, much as he would have enjoyed doing so. "All the same, a cave's a big attraction. Lots of people must have tried their luck exploring, in the hope of some secret hidie-hole."

"Not so many know of the cave, that it is there," said Pat. "Some bushes grow in front and hide the mouth. If not, you would have seen it yourself. But Larry told all the people who came to stay this spring. He thought it would amuse them to look for the treasure. And it was promised—if there had not been the fire!—that when we came home from our trip we would give a party to dig under the pines. Each one was to have a spade; and it would be allowed to dig down some feet, but not enough to hurt the pines. The gardeners were to decide on that. Larry thought it would be fun. But I am not sure if *Mistaire Caspian* would not have persuaded him to forget the plan. He told me, if there were a treasure, it would be best to keep it for ourselves."

"All in the family," said I. And to myself I added, "Catch him giving something for nothing!"

"Shall I take a peep at that fellow down there?" suggested Jack. "He has no right trespassing anyhow, whether he's prospecting for treasure or waiting for his girl."

"Let's all three go and stare at him with calm reproach," I said. "The moonlight will shine on our faces and turn us into accusing spirits."

We got up and walked across the lawn, threading our way among trees till we came to the bank where we could look down to the water and straight across to the Point. There was the boat, tethered to a bush, but the man had vanished.

"By Jove! He *must* be in the cave!" said Jack. "I'll go—"

"No, you won't!" I cut him short fiercely. "If you do I'll scream at the top of my voice and yell for help. He may be a murderer!"

"Xantippe!" Jack retorted; but he couldn't help laughing when Pat and I both seized his dinner-jacket.

"Look!" whispered the girl at that instant. "Just there! A light—a little faint light—behind the bushes."

"The fellow's coming out," said Jack.

"Oh, then we can all stand behind this tree and watch," I proposed. "When he's getting into his boat Jack can challenge him. He'll probably be so scared he'll fall into the water."

The tree I meant was a large-waisted willow, of the weppiest variety, with girth enough and tears enough to hide us all, especially as Pat and I were darkly dressed—she in green and I in gray.

We hadn't many minutes to wait, indeed, it was but half an hour since we came out, for the clock we had heard struck again: midnight. We felt deliciously creepy! Of course I hadn't wanted Jack not mended yet from the trenches to go crawling on all fours into perfectly irrelevant caves with no Orders of Merit or Victoria Crosses attached to them. At the same time, we were keyed for comedy, and just excited enough to forget the skeletons in

our closets at home: Caspians, and Shusters, and money-lenders, and unpleasant things like that.

It was just as the clock finished striking that the light in the cave (if you can call a gleam like an exaggerated glowworm a light) went out, or in Jack's words "dowsed its glim." This meant, we surmised, that the man had finished his mysterious (probably ridiculous) errand, and could now get along with no lamp but the moon. There was a faint rustle, rustle among the bushes which discreetly veiled the opening, and from behind them came a man. For a second or two he stood up straight as if he were stretching himself and taking a full breath. The moon shone behind him, outlining his figure; and, Mercedes, if you were here I would bet *anything* you couldn't guess who it was. As it is I can't hope to win money from you. I must just tell you, and have done with it!

The man was Peter Storm.

We recognized him in time for Jack not to give that challenge we had planned. Whether J. decided not to give it because the man was Peter, or because he was dumbfounded, I didn't know then, but he told me afterward that he instantly decided to keep still for Peter's sake. He knew, of course, whatever Peter was up to ~~it was~~ was nothing mean or underhand about it, and as it was evidently meant for a secret expedition it would annoy Peter to be caught. I had exactly the same impression myself; and Pat said later that she would have "cr-r-umped all up" if Jack had called out.

We hardly breathed while Peter was getting into his boat and untying the painter that had moored it to a bush. Even then we had to wait before coming back to life,

for he sat still a minute or two, with his hands on the sculls, and looked our way, as if he were gazing at us. Of course we knew we were safely concealed from sight, and that he was only staring past trees and shrubbery at the dark, distant house. From that point of view there wasn't a twinkle of light to be seen through a blind; and if Jack and I hadn't taken the unusual whim into our heads to motor over from home, Patty would have been in bed and perhaps fast asleep for an hour.

I never realized before how hard it is, with the best intentions, to keep utterly, absolutely still: except once when I was a little girl and a nurse I had took me to a Quaker meeting. It was a silent one. I thought something awful would be done to me if I moved; and I tell you I could hear my *ribs creak* when I breathed! So I could again now, huddled behind the tree. And I thought I could hear Patty's hair curl.

When Peter had rowed away, and he and his boat had disappeared round the Point, we all three drew a deep sigh of relief. Then we looked at each other.

"Jiminy Christmas!" said I.

"Exactly!" said Jack.

Only Pat said nothing. Then she clasped her hands on an inspiration. "Do you know what I think?" she exclaimed. "Yes—it *must* be that! There is nothing else which can explain. Mr. Storm is ver-ry sorry for us, Larry and me, because once more we are in ruin. Not even Marcel can do us good now! But if it were true about the tr-asure of the Captain Kidd, it would be ours. It would save me from—I mean, it would save us from all the trouble we are in. Don't you see, Molly and

Jack, that is it? He went into the cave to search. If he would find the treasure, he would tell us we were rich."

While she was talking, explaining her theory, my mind worked fast. What she said put an idea into my head. It was different from her idea, because I had a clue—when I came to think of it—that she didn't possess. As it turned out, Jack's brain was working in the same direction as mine, at the same moment. I guessed this, before he told me, from what he said in answer to Pat.

"Perhaps you're right," he told her. "I'm afraid Storm must have been disappointed, though, if he was looking for Captain Kidd's treasure to give you. He came out with empty hands. Maybe, though, now you've got the inspiration you'll be more lucky, you and your father. I agree with Caspian on this subject: you'd better not invite too many people to your treasure-hunting bee. In fact, I think it had better confine itself to members of the family."

"No use," sighed Pat. "There's not a hole nor a corner of that cave I didn't search like a needle for a haystack—I mean the othaire way round—when I was petite."

"Do you give me leave to explore?" asked Jack.

"Yes, indeed," said Pat. Yet I thought she hesitated before she spoke. "When will you like to go?"

"I must dress for the job, I suppose," said Jack. "Shall we say to-morrow at ten o'clock in the morning, with you and Molly and nobody else in a stage box to watch the performance?"

Pat agreed, laughing, yet there was something peculiar—an *arrière pensée*—in her laugh. She had suddenly become

absent-minded—or else she was sleepy; and I reminded Jack that it was growing late. We took the girl back to the house, into which she disappeared with a dreamy, "la Somnambula" air; and for once I was glad to see the last of the dear child. I was *dying* to talk to Jack. But I'm not going to inflict our discussion upon you. Instead, I'll tell you what happened in the morning (that's to-day!). We got up early and Jack sported a shocking old suit of knickerbockers, just right for an up-to-date cave man. You see, he really meant to keep his engagement. If he found anything, as he thought quite probable, it would bear out his theory and save unsuspecting Peter the trouble of working the Moore family up to an interest in the cave. We were just attacking our coffee and rolls, however, at eight-thirty, when Pat appeared, hovering at the end of the vine covered pergola which we use for a breakfast-room.

"Come to remind me of my promise?" laughed Jack, jumping up. But as she drifted slowly in, we saw that, whatever her errand might be, for her it was no laughing matter.

"I have to confess a thing to you both," she said. "I have been in the cave. Even before you went away, I made up my mind I would go in. I did not sleep too much. I got up when it was light. I put on a bad dress. I slid down the bank like when I was a little one. I creped into the cave, with a candle, the way I used to do. It is not distant to the end, where one can squeeze. I looked all over, everywhere, as always when I was small. I remembered a hole far at the back—not a big hole—where I used to put pretty pebbles and play I was Captain Kidd with

my pockets full of diamonds. The hole was there, but stuffed up with stones. I pulled them all out. And behind I saw a box—a queer old oak box. But oh, Molly, I have seen that box before, it was only a few days ago!"

"Not *possible!*!" I cried, anxious to defend poor Peter and his quixotic plot.

"You would say not. Yet it is so. I saw the box—or its twin box—at that dear old Robinson house which is made into a curiosity shop at Bennington."

"You must have been dreaming," said Jack, backing me up.

"No. I saw it. But Mr. Storm did not know I saw it, because he did think I was not in the room where it was. He thought I was always with Mr. Caspian. And so I was, except for a minute. I went to look for you, in a back room. You were not there. You must have gone upstairs—"

"I did, to see a table Miss Robinson spoke of," I admitted.

"Only Mr. Storm was in the back room. He had in his hand the box, with a large date carved in the wood. If he bought it I am not sure, for I went away quickly when I saw he was alone. And after, there was nothing in his hand. But maybe when he wanted an old box with a date of 1669—yes, that *particular* date of *all* others!—he remembered, and went back to Bennington—or sent."

"Good gracious, but why a box of that 'particular' date?" I wanted to know. Which was stupid of me. I ought to have recalled at once the fact that Captain Kidd was supposed to be burying treasure in 1669.

"It was the year of Captain Kidd!" Pat reminded me;

and went on, as if in desperation: "In the hole of *our* cave, to-day, was *that* box, from Miss Robinson's house in Bennington. There was no lock to it; and I suppose Mr. Storm could not wait to have one made. He was in a hurry. I understand why, but I cannot tell you that. All I can tell is, *it was there*. I pulled it out from the hole—it was not so heavy!—and not more than thirty centimetres long. Inside was sand, and mixed up with the sand many, many jewels—oh, a fortune in jewels. I know, because I took the box to my room—nobody was up, so no one saw me. I spread on the floor a bed-coverlet and poured out the sand on it. Then I could count the beautiful stones without the fear they would roll away. There are a hundred pearls, oh, but large ones, big as peas; and some rubies, and diamonds in the dozen—emeralds, too. I do not know too much of such things, but they must all have cost ten, twenty, or maybe more thousands of dollars."

As she finished, breathless, Pat looked from one to the other of us. And Jack and I dared not look at each other, or our eyes would have said, "Told you so!"

"He put these things to make us rich, where we would think they were *ours*," the girl went on. "It was noble. He would never have confessed—never let us know what we owed to him. If you and me had not seen him last night—and if I had not known the box—we should have believed. We should have sold the jewels and paid our debts. And I—but what use to think of what I could have done? What I *must* do, is to tell him I *know*--yes, the *minute* he comes back to our house. It will be to-day, for now we can guess what has kept him so busy. He has

somehow got these jewels—not set, so they may seem to be very old. But how—*how* did he get them—a poor man like him?"

"However he got them, it's all *right*," Jack soothed her. "I am sure!" she said proudly. "He was to try and find money. He told me that at Bretton Woods. He finds it. But he does not keep. He gives it to me, like this! Of course it does no good. Of course I cannot take. I wish I could see him *here* at this house, with you to help me talk of last night."

Well, so it was arranged, according to her wish: that we should send over to his "diggings," as he calls them, and see if Peter had arrived. The car was despatched with the chauffeur and a hasty note from me; and Patty waited with us for news. But there was no news. Mr. Storm had not come, and his landlady, the village dressmaker, knew nothing of his movements.

There, my dear, I must leave my story. About this episode you now know as much as I do, or any of us. But doesn't it make you love Peter? When he told me his secret, he never breathed a word of this intention.

If only one chance in a million hadn't placed his best girl and two of his best friends within spying distance, the poor fellow's plan would have been a brilliant success. No doubt his idea was to propose (as if jokingly) to Larry a search for Captain Kidd's alleged treasure, to replenish the family fortunes after the fire. They would have been indebted to no one for what the cave might yield. A rich Larry and Patty could have arisen like a pair of phoenixes hand in hand from their own ashes, and flown high above Caspian and Shuster level!

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The thing is now to let Peter know his plan has failed before he begins talking about buried treasure. We must manage it somehow. By the pricking in my thumbs, I feel he'll come this afternoon! And luckily, if all is well, the treasure troving won't be his only errand.

To-morrow I shall perhaps be able to let you into the whole secret. If he but realizes that time is the great object now!

Your

MOLLY IN SUSPENSE.

P. S. I do think it was fun about the box from Miss Robinson's, don't you?

### XXXIII

#### MOLLY WINSTON TO MERCEDES LANE

*Awepesha.*

DEAREST:

I believe that, next to the day Jack proposed to me at Taormina, and the day we were married in London, this has been the most exciting day of my life. I expected excitement, but nothing to what we have had!

I wrote you yesterday morning, after Pat went home to the boxful of sand and jewels which not even Larry was to know about. The note I wrote to Peter Storm had been left at his lodgings, so when he returned he would know that he was wanted at our house. The trouble was, we had no idea *when* he would return; and that poor child Pat was trembling in her extremely high-heeled shoes (she never wears boots to tremble in) lest Caspian should reappear upon the scene. I hardly dared hope that the letter Jack had sent to Mr. Strickland's office would reach Peter; but it was that which did the trick. Mr. Strickland *was* the lawyer he had been consulting about his complicated affairs, and when the note arrived, Mr. S. knew where to send it. No sooner was it read, than Peter bolted from New York to Long Island, and had the happy thought of coming to see us, to pick up the latest news from the front. I was so pleased to see him walk in, I could almost have kissed him! But I didn't

stop to talk long. I ordered Hiawatha, and dashed off to fetch Pat. I was afraid if I merely *sent* for her, something might happen to keep the girl at home, or Caspian might have turned up, and insist on coming with her.

As it happened, I wasn't far wrong. Caspian *had* indeed turned up, bringing a strange man with him, and both were closeted with Larry. I whisked Pat away before she could be called into the council chamber. The poor child insisted on carrying the "Captain Kidd" box, wrapped in a silk tablecloth from Como! She wanted to place it in the hands of its owner and donor without delay, and Peter and she were to be given some moments alone together, Jack having prepared the mind of P. S. meanwhile.

The two men were in the library when I opened the door and walked in upon them. Jack had finished telling the tale of the night, and I felt pity as well as affection for Peter. He doesn't show his emotions easily, but I could see that he was pained and humiliated by the failure of his romantic scheme. I said not a word to him about it, but mentioned that Patsey was in my boudoir. "I think she has something to say to you," I added.

"I'll go to her at once, if I may!" he exclaimed.

"You not only may but must," I enjoined; then stopped him at the door. "I hope you're ready to tell her everything now?"

"I'm ready, yes," he answered promptly. "But is it the best time—"

"It's the only time there is!" I cut him short.

"She's right," Jack backed me up.

"Very well," said Peter. "If you both say it's the

supreme moment, it is. But I shall have to go through with what she's got for me first."

With that, he went out and shut the door. And I confess to you, Mercédes, I should have liked to be a fly on the wall in my boudoir during the scene between those two. A fly has no conscientious scruples against eavesdropping, which is fortunate for it, as nature has equipped it so well for indulgence in that pursuit. As I couldn't be a fly on a ceiling, looking at Peter and Pat upside down, I went and sat on Jack's lap.

"Dearest," said I, "you tell me what *you'd* say if you were Peter, and I'll tell you what *I'd* say if I were Pat."

"I wouldn't say anything," replied Jack without an instant's hesitation. "I should just take you in my arms, and hug you hard. I should also kiss you. And one kiss leads to another, you know."

"I do know," I admitted. "By experience. You taught me that. It's one of the lessons of life."

"I'll bet Patricia Moore is learning it at this instant," Jack remarked thoughtfully. And we kissed each other in sheer vividness of imagination.

"But she's still engaged to Ed Caspian," I reminded him.

"Damn Caspian!" said Jack; and then jumped, staring at something over the back of my head.

I bounded off his lap as if a Jack Johnson had exploded at my feet. Wheeling round to stare where he stared, I saw the most deadly reputable of my dear late cousin's servants ushering into the room the person apostrophized. Behind that person followed one I had never seen before. Behind both lurked Larry Moore, for once in his life ill

at ease; and by his side, urging him in, was Mrs. Shuster.

"How do you do?" I exclaimed, trying to look as if I had never seen Jack's knee, and feeling as if my toes were blushing.

What Jack did I don't know; but I suspect he put on a nonchalant air of "Well, we *are* married, anyhow!"

"I'm sorry to interrupt a conversation evidently not meant for *my* ear," began Caspian. (Trust him always to do and say the wrong thing!) "But I understand Mrs. Winston called at Kidd's Pines and took Miss Moore away at a moment when both I and her father wanted her particularly. That being the case, I thought I had better come here and let her kind host and hostess learn the news at the same time."

"Meaning us?" I inquired, feeling dangerous.

"Meaning you and Captain Winston. The news will interest you both. It is about two dear friends of yours, Marcel Moncourt and—his son."

"We've never had the pleasure of meeting Marcel Moncourt Junior," said Jack.

"Oh, yes, you have, begging your pardon," said Ed. "Only you know him by another name. By the way, may I ask, before I go further, where is Patricia?"

"Pat's in my boudoir," I informed him airily. "She's engaged just now, talking to Mr. Storm. He—"

"Is the person I referred to a moment ago," Caspian sliced my sentence in two. "Marcel Moncourt Junior has good reason for taking an alias. It was known to everybody who knew him and his father that he was a wastrel, if not worse. Marcel Senior was a fool about

him—brought him up like a prince, and suffered the consequences. The boy spent money like water, and was hauled out of one scrape only to fall into another. Then came the time of my cousin old Justin Stanislaws' death. It happened under strange circumstances; there was suggestion of foul play. Young Marcel was in the house at the time—had arrived secretly. I know that certain jewels disappeared mysteriously—couldn't be found afterward—jewels that Stanislaws always kept near him because of certain associations. Not only did they disappear, but young Marcel disappeared, too—whether with or without them was never proved. Stanislaws' son was alive then and protected the fellow: they'd been friends as boys. No inquiry was made till I became the heir. Then it was too late. Marcel Junior had gone abroad and couldn't be located. It was then it came to my knowledge that suspicion pointed to young Marcel not only as a thief but as a murderer——”

“Oh, come, sir, that's going a bit too far!” ventured the mean-looking little man who had come in with Caspian, and who had been growing more and more restless as Ed piled up his accusations.

“Why, too far, when you told me yourself that one of his handkerchiefs was found in my cousin's room the morning after the murder?”

“Well, you see, sir, there was never anything more than gossip to say it *was* a murder,” persisted the little man. Turning anxiously to Jack, he hurried to explain himself. “I was valet to the old gentleman at the time of his death,” he announced. “I'm an Englishman, as I think you are, sir. My name's Thomas Dawson. I've

been living in Chicago and other cities of the Middle West since young Mr. Stanislaws (who was drowned later) paid me off and let me go. This gentleman, the heir to the estates, has had me looked up by a detective agency. I came to New York willing enough; but I didn't come to accuse no one of murder, whether I have any cause to remember them kindly or not!"

"You're not asked to accuse any one, you're asked to identify a man you know," snapped Caspian. He, too, turned to Jack. "It's very annoying as things have turned out, that Moncourt Senior didn't stop on at Kidd's Pines after the fire instead of going to New York. He ought to be here now, so we could confront him with—"

"Really, Caspian, I think 'confront' isn't the word to use in such a tone and in connection with our Marcel," Jack admonished him.

"What, not the word when he has passed off his wretched son upon us as a stranger, and let the fellow take a confidential situation with a rich woman like Mrs. Shuster? She might have suffered the same fate as my poor cousin. There's no excuse for such conduct. It's not weakness but wickedness. The whole mystery of Marcel's taking up the job at Kidd's Pines is explained by this impudent trick—"

"Hardly explained," objected Jack. "You haven't proved your point yet."

"What point haven't I proved?"

"That Mr. Storm is really Marcel Moncourt Junior."

"We came here to prove it, before every one concerned," blustered Ed. "All I ask is to have him brought in."

"He'll bring himself very willingly!" I couldn't resist sticking in my ear. "And Pat with him."

"I'll fetch my fiancée myself, if you please, Mrs. Winston," said Caspian, at his most caddish.

I didn't intend to let him do that, but I was saved the trouble of a dispute by the door opening and Pat and Peter walking in, as if they had been hypnotically summoned. They hadn't heard the visitors' arrival, but had evidently expected to find Jack and me alone. I saw by a glance at Pat's face that the interview had made some call upon her emotions; but I didn't think she looked wild enough to have heard the whole secret. Besides, they'd hardly been away long enough for all that—and the other things Jack and I had so vividly imagined. They both paused for a second at the door, and Pat had the air of wishing she were somewhere else. She braced herself up, however, for a scene, and marched in with her head up—Peter Storm by her side. I saw Peter's eyes pick out the little man Thomas Dawson, whom Caspian pushed slightly forward. Peter was surprised, no doubt of that, but he seemed also amused, as if his quick mind had grasped the situation. His look travelled to Jack's face and mine. He smiled at us. Then, "Hello, Dawson!" said he.

"Good lord, sir!" gasped Dawson, turning green, and losing power over his knees. He grabbed at Caspian for support, was haughtily pushed away, and tumbled into a chair, like a jelly out of its mould. As it chanced, the chair was a rocking-chair, and the conjunction was undignified.

"What's the matter?" Ed questioned sharply. "Why don't you speak up? Is this man's name Marcel Moncourt?"

"No, sir, it's Stanislaus. He's—he's the young master—or else he's a ghost."

There, my dear, the Secret's out! Perhaps, if you've been able to keep track of Caspian's antecedents as described in my letters, you've guessed it already. But in case you haven't attached much importance to that part of the affair, I'll just remind you that Ed Caspian was lifted out of the ranks of his fellow socialists and capital haters, by becoming a capitalist himself, on the death of two distant cousins, Stanislaus' father and Stanislaus' son, tremendous millionaires. The old man died some time before the young one, who disappeared with the *Lusitania* and was reported drowned. You can imagine the effect on Ed when, instead of crushing the enemy, he found himself crushed. He turned tallow-white, glaring at Dawson, staring at Storm, and stammered out: "I don't believe you! It's a lie!"

"No, Caspian, it's not a lie," said Peter Storm, whom Jack and I have known since Wenham as Pietro Stanislaus. He spoke almost gently. "I meant to stay dead—not for your sake, but for my own. The only fun I'd ever got out of life was from knocking round the world with just enough money to put bread in my mouth and clothes on my back. My father never saw you, and never wanted to see you. He had reason to dislike socialists. I never saw you, and wanted to still less. I thought you would be a bore. But I respected what I heard of you. People told me you were sincere. They said your aim in life was to benefit your fellowman. You were a hard worker. You seemed to have every virtue. I thought you'd do more

good with my father's money than I ever should, if I shouldered the responsibility. I was always a socialist at heart—but I was selfish. I'd hated the conventional life my father wanted me to live, and I'd kicked against the pricks. I came back to consciousness after that adventure on the *Lusitania*, and found that no one knew who I was. I'd babbled Russian when I was delirious! The next thing I learned, was that Pietro Stanislaws was drowned. I couldn't resist the big temptation to let him sleep under the sea. I'd happened to know something about a chap named Peter Sturm or Storm in the third class of the *Lusitania*. He hadn't turned up afterward, so I thought—as I'd done him a small kindness—he wouldn't grudge me his name. I felt at home with the name of Peter. So that's how it came about. And no matter what my own feelings might have been—no matter how much I might for any reason have wanted to change my mind—I wouldn't have gone back on my resolution if it hadn't been for your own conduct."

"I don't know what you mean!" Caspian choked. "I don't believe——"

"I think you do believe," Peter caught him up (I can't remember his precise words of course; but I give you the sense of them). "And if you'll reflect you must pretty well understand my meaning. What kind of a steward have you been of the great enterests intrusted to you? Have you done one person except yourself any good? No! The moment your circumstances changed, your nature changed to fit them; or, rather, you let your real nature have its way when you'd nothing more to gain by posing. You've not only thrown away my father's money—my

money—on every sort of extravagance: you've been actually vicious. My lawyer James Strickland was the only person on earth, except Marcel Moncourt Senior, who knew that I hadn't gone down with the *Lusitania*. Marcel didn't know till I came back to New York, recalled by Strickland's accounts of your behaviour. Then I got Strickland to break the news to Marcel—for a purpose. I wanted a favour from him. I wanted him to help Lawrence Moore. But even then you would have been safe from me, Caspian, if you'd shown yourself any sort of a man. I began a letter about you to Strickland on the ship coming home. It blew away, and so did some of my plans concerning you. It was Fate! But this isn't revenge for your petty persecutions of Storm! I hope I'm not little enough to take vengeance. I saw you weren't fit for the place I had given you. Seeing that, I decided that Pietro Stanislaws had a right to come back from the grave. But don't imagine that I intend to throw you out on the world with empty pockets. That would be unfair, after the way I've let you live. I was the owner of the Stanislaws house, as it's called. Strickland arranged the business for me; and at my wish he offered it to you, Caspian. You bought: now you can sell to me again at a profit; and you'll owe me no thanks for any favour, which is my reason for wanting such a deal. Talk to my lawyer. He'll be expecting you to call."

"You'll have to prove that you're Pietro Stanislaws!" Caspian still weakly protested. "The story doesn't ring true to me. You may be taking advantage of some resemblance. You may be another Tichborne claimant. Why, now I think of it, I always heard there was a likeness be-

tween young Moncourt and young Stanislaws—that Moncourt did all he could to cultivate it!"

"Well, of that you can judge to-day," said Peter, keeping his temper. "Thanks to Miss Moore, Marcel Senior and I learned where Marcel Junior was hanging out. Marcel Senior has thought for a while that he had some cause to be grateful to me: that's why he stepped into the breach at my request, at Kidd's Pines. And I wanted him to do it—for one reason—because when I was a boy of thirteen or fourteen Mrs. Moore was very good to me. I was at a school on Long Island. I ran away, as I generally did: stole a ride on a freight train—fell off, got hurt, was seen by Mrs. Moore as she was driving with her little daughter, and instead of letting me be taken to hospital she brought me home to her house. I'm not sure if her husband approved. All the same he allowed me to stay and get well. It wasn't till I was able to get about that I told them who I was. But all that's an aside! It explains why I wanted to do a decent turn to Kidd's Pines if I could. Miss Moore mentioned to me when we were spending a few days at the Stanislaws house some weeks ago that a young man named Marcel de Moncourt was visiting friends of hers in France, and claiming to be their cousin. Well, that was a true claim, as Marcel Senior informed me. He himself came to America when he was young, to make his fortune, and dropped the "de" out of his name. He says he'd been rather a black sheep, and didn't deserve to be identified with his family. We had a powwow, he and I, about young Marcel. There was, and is, *nothing against him* in the matter of my father's death. I won't go into that question at the moment, but I can show good cause

for protecting him then, and protecting him now. When we communicated with Marcel in France, where he'd arrived from the Argentine he decided to sail at once for this side, with his cousins the Marquise de Moncourt and her daughter Adrienne, to whom he is engaged. I've just been telling Miss Moore that her best friends—present company excepted"—(Peter smiled at Jack and me)"that her best friends arrived this morning, from Bordeaux to New York, where Marcel Senior met them and his son at the dock. He meant to escort them to Kidd's Pines; and they may arrive there at any minute. When the Marquise and her daughter find that Mr. and Miss Moore are here, perhaps they'll let Marcel bring them on."

I glanced at Larry. (From hints Pat had innocently let drop, I was sure the Marquise had been in love with Larry for years: that she'd kept Pat under her thumb in France, hoping to keep Larry, too. It occurred to me that things said by the girl in letters to Adrienne—things about Mrs. Shuster, or Idonia, or both—had probably brought the Marquise flying to the rescue. Or else, that unspeakable maid of Pat's—Angèle—was engaged by the Marquise to let her know what was "doing" at Kidd's Pines.) Larry's face was a study! Not a study of "detected guilt." Nothing like that. He looked sheepish, yet *relieved*. I read in his beautiful eyes of a boy, "Hurray! I bet she'll somehow rescue me from Shuster yet!"

I should have bet the same, if there'd been any one to bet with, but there wasn't—unless Mrs. Shuster herself. And she didn't yet realize what the advent of the French-woman might mean for her future. She was beginning to recover from the shock of Caspian's fall, and to preen

herself because she was about to meet a real, live Marquise.

She had only a few minutes to wait, for Peter's prophecy came true. The great Marcel did bring the Marquise and Adrienne on, by their urgent request, to Awepesha. Pat, it seems, had written so much about Jack and me, they almost felt as if they knew us! And young Marcel, already assured that he'd nothing to fear in America, was with his father and the ladies. (I'll tell you presently the story of old Justin Stanislaws' death and young Marcel's connection with it: but I'd never heard it properly myself when the Moncourt party arrived. You see Marcel didn't come much into Peter Storm's "Secret," as he'd confessed it to me.)

There was hardly time to wonder what the Marquise and young Marcel would be like (and Adrienne) when the visitors were announced by our bewildered butler. If you have felt any sympathy for Larry you'll be glad to hear that the Marquise is a Charmer from Charmerville. How Larry ever resisted her all these years I can't think, unless he valued his freedom beyond the lure of woman, and refrained from going to France for fear of striking his colours. She's the Frenchiest creature you ever saw: you know, the fascinating kind with magnolia-white skin, languishing eyes, black hair worn over the ears, red lips, and any age you like between twenty-eight and forty-five. Adrienne, compared to her mother, is a mere *lump*. But she has fine eyes and a bright smile, and Pat loves her, so she must be nice.

As for Marcel Junior, he really does look a little like Peter; a sort of a Christmas-card resemblance to a strong

type. He's really engaged to Adrienne, it appears, and is an entirely reformed character; but I expect that the ménage will be mostly enriched by Marcel Père—and Peter.

I hope you are dying to know how Pat took Peter Storm's transformation into Pietro Stanislaws. But I'm going to save that bit for the last. I must explain to you some of the things Peter explained to me at Aunt Mary's, and other things I've learned since, else you won't be able to understand him as we do.

That running-away-from-school affair was characteristic, but not as anarchic as it sounds. His father, Justin Stanislaws, was Polish in ancestry but American by birth. He got to know Marcel Moncourt Senior soon after Marcel's bolt from France to New York. They both married Italian girls, who were beautiful and intimate friends. The father of Stanislaws' love was rich, and lived in terror of the "Black Hand." Stanislaws won her by saving the life of his father-in-law elect; and that was the starting-point of his great fortune. Once he had the nucleus, his genius for making money began to pile dollars up by the million. Marcel hadn't "found" himself yet. Stanislaws lost sight of him for years; but after Pietro's mother died, Marcel appeared again, also a widower, with one little boy. He was as poor as Stanislaws was rich. Yet he felt in himself the quality to supply the millionaire with something money had failed to give: social success. He explained his ideas; Stanislaws had the sense to see that they were good. Marcel "took him on," so to speak, organized his establishment, arranged magnificent and original entertainments; got him known and sought for by the right "set," and so, each man "made" the other.

Marcel started out on his new career with a thumping salary; Stanislaws advised investments and speculations. Marcel began to grow rich as well as famous, and might have been happy but for his son. Marcel Junior was a "caution!" From his early boyhood he was always falling into trouble, and having to be helped out by his adoring father or the indulgent Stanislaws, who seemed for a while to care more for young Marcel Moncourt than for his own high-spirited and independent Pietro. But at last he grew tired of the constant calls upon his generosity, and relations became strained.

By this time both the boys were grown up. Pietro's greatest joy was wandering over the world like a gypsy or a tramp, or anything but a "tourist." When his father's health failed he was summoned back from a glorious adventure in Russia, and expected to "settle down." He couldn't bear to disappoint the old man, and did his best to live up to expectations; but he was like a young lion caught in the Libyan Desert and shut in a gilded cage. The people his father wanted him to entertain bored him to tears. He saw that they valued Justin and Pietro Stanislaws for what could be got out of them: invitations, dinners, financial "tips," tours *en automobile*; and there was no reward for which Peter cared. "Our houses were practically hotels," he said to me, "and our hearts were utilized as snake hospitals. I might as well have been a chauffeur for all the choice of guests or destination I had when I drove my father's friends in our cars. I never did anything I wanted to do, and I never got any gratitude for doing what they wanted me to do. I might as well have been a goldfish, swimming round and round in the

same globe, month after month, year after year. It wasn't my job! Nature hadn't made me for a fat, tame life. But young Marcel wasn't as much use as an understudy for a dutiful son as I'd once hoped. So I made up my mind to stick it while father lived and wanted me."

I don't know just how long Peter was in the "treadmill"—as he called it: two years, perhaps, then came Justin Stanislaws' sudden death. The old man was found by his valet one morning, lying dead on the marble floor of his gorgeous bedroom, with a wound at the back of his head, and a handkerchief marked "M.M." clutched in his hand. The wall safe where he kept his most precious treasures—photographs of his dead wife, her letters, and the favourite jewels which she had left for "Pietro's bride"—was open, the key was still in the lock, and the steel box containing the jewels had disappeared. Young Marcel Moncourt had also disappeared; and this was serious, because he had come to visit his father and had vainly begged for the loan of five thousand dollars from Justin Stanislaws.

You will wonder when you read this why Peter didn't set the police on Marcel's track, instead of doing all he could not only to protect him but to upset the theory of murder. But you see, in spite of the circumstantial evidence, Peter didn't believe that his father had been killed by Marcel or any one. The doctors said that the wound at the back of the head could quite well be the result of the fall; and that death might have been caused by heart failure. As for the handkerchief, Marcel Senior assured Peter that he and young Marcel used the same monogram: also that more than once his handkerchiefs and Justin Stanislaws' had been mixed together by the

laundress, as they were of exactly the same size and quality, differing only in initials. He pleaded that the handkerchief was no clue, and no proof of a crime. He argued that the old man was a poor sleeper, and often unlocked the safe in the night, to look over the beloved letters and photographs. For that purpose he kept his bunch of keys under his pillow; and as for the absence of the jewels, that proved nothing because he—Marcel Senior—had himself warned Stanislaws that it was imprudent to have them there. Several other hiding-places, more secure and more secret, existed in the house; and some day, it was his opinion, the steel box might eventually be found in one of them, placed there by Stanislaws.

Peter listened, and pitied, and his own heart spoke for both Marcells. He decided to give his old playmate the benefit of the doubt, and you know already from what I've told you about Peter that, when he makes up his mind to do a thing, he does it thoroughly. The story that Justin Stanislaws had been murdered was denied, and scorn was poured upon it by the family. It survived only among sensation mongers and gossip lovers—like Caspian—who always believe the worst of every one and everything. Marcel Senior was grateful beyond words, but he was conscientious, too. Months passed with no word from his son (this was no new experience!), then a letter came from the Argentine.

"I'm doing well here," wrote Marcel Junior. "You won't have to worry about me in future. I know I've been a fool; but for once and for all I've had my lesson." And he went on to tell what the lesson was. "I was half crazy when you and old Stanislaws refused to let me have

five thousand dollars," he said. "The scrape I'd got into was worse than I'd told you. I was at my wits' ends for money, and I dreamed about the safe in Stanislaws' wall. I knew what he kept there. He often showed Pietro and me the jewels. I dreamed that I went into his room, took the keys from under the pillow, and opened the safe. Then a noise woke me up. The dream was true. I waked standing at the open safe with the steel box in my hand. The noise that brought me to myself was Stanislaws falling on the marble floor. You know I've been a sleep walker all my life. But I realized in a second how hard it would be to prove myself innocent, whether Stanislaws lived or died. I thought my one chance was to be off before morning. I swear I didn't mean to steal the jewels. But the first thing I knew, I was out in the hall with the box in my hand, and I dared not go back!"

Marcel Junior went on to say that to his surprise the jewel-case wasn't locked. Because he had no money to get away with, he took out a diamond ring. The box, with the rest of its contents intact, he buried in the garden. In the hiding-place described it was found by Marcel Senior who carried it, with the letter, to Pietro.

It was soon after this that Peter finished settling up his father's affairs with the help of James Strickland, and sailed for England in the *Lusitania*, meaning to take a long holiday after his strenuous years as a budding millionaire. The recovered jewels he left in Strickland's care. And now you will have guessed, Mercédes, whence came those pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds requisitioned for Miss Robinson's box with its convenient date of 1669! All that had to be done was to unstring the pearls and

unset the stones, and they might be supposed to date from one century as well as another.

Now have I made everything clear, I wonder, up to the time when the *Lusitania* went down and Pietro Stanislaws was reborn as Peter Storm? Oh, but one thing I forgot! You remember I wrote about the Russian Military Attaché from Washington, who recognized Peter and was mesmerically suppressed by him at New London? There was no great mystery after all. They'd known each other in Russia, so you may imagine it was a shock to the Prince, seeing his dead friend suddenly walk into the hotel. That was a bad moment for Peter! He wanted to declare his identity when the time came, not to have it given away; so he pounced on the man and whispered, "Girl in the case. I'll explain." Which he did later and in private.

Now we come back at last to Pat: "the girl in the case!" But you haven't let yourself worry about her, have you, Mercédes?

Even I didn't worry much. From the moment she and Peter retired into my boudoir to "talk things over," and Jack and I sat supplying details out of our imagination, I knew that whatever happened all would be well. For that I trusted Peter.

If Ed Caspian had fallen from his high estate through no fault of his own, and could have posed as a martyr, Pat might have thought it her duty to be loyal. Even so she could never have said, "I will," when invited to take him for better or worse. As it was, Caspian could pose as nothing but a *pig*! He had given himself away, all along the line. And he was not to go pathetically out into the

world alone as a pauper. He would have more money than he'd ever dreamed of until after the *Lusitania* tragedy. He would at worst be able to fight with Senator Collinge over the hand (and purse) of his dear old friend Mrs. Shuster, if Larry escaped her! The only difficulties I foresaw concerned the pawned engagement ring and Larry's debts to Lily. As to these I boldly decided that if worst came to worst I would betray my trust and tell Peter everything.

You will see, however, that my conscience was saved, and by Caspian.

Pat, of course, was petrified at seeing Peter Storm turn into Pietro Stanislaws. She listened dumbly to Peter's indictment of Caspian; and then, before she found time or words to speak, the little wretch turned to snap at her like a trapped jackal.

"You'll throw me over now!" he sneered. "That goes without telling. Rats desert a sinking ship. But—*what do you mean to do about my ring?* Maybe you thought I didn't know. Ask Mrs. Shuster! Angéle told her. I guess Mrs. Shuster's money and my ring have gone the same way!"

That was too much for Larry. "You'd better go after your d—d ring, then!" said he, looking like a handsome, angry schoolboy. "I can give you the pawn-ticket; and I bet Peter Storm—or Stanislaws—will lend the money to redeem the beastly thing. As for Mrs. Shuster, we won't bring her name into this. She and I will settle our affairs, official and unofficial, although you seem to be so deep in her confidence. I say, Captain Winston, do you mind my telling Caspian that the nearest way to the

pawnbroker's is through your front door, and the quicker he finds it the better?"

"I don't mind in the least your telling him that," Jack replied pleasantly.

"And I should *love* you to!" I added breathlessly.

This brought Pat to me. "Oh, *Molly!*" she said.

"Oh, *Patsey!*" said I.

Then Peter came to us. "Oh, *Peter!*" said we both.

Somehow, I found that in his right hand was a hand of mine, and in his left (nearest the heart) was one of Patty's. "It's all right," he said. "It ends by *my* getting the treasure of Kidd's Pines."

"Well, I do think you've earned it!" I exclaimed. "If it were mine to give I'd give it with my blessing."

"I owe it largely to you—you and your Lightning Conductor." It was to me Peter spoke; but he looked at Pat. "I don't know what I should have done without you."

That was nice of him, wasn't it? I love praise, even when I don't deserve it. We *have* taken an interest, if we've done nothing more. And so have you, my kind Mercédes. Peter and Pat, and you and Monty, and Jack and I, are Perfect Dears, if I do say it myself. And I know those two are going to be as happy as we are.

I wish you could both be at the wedding. It will have to be soon, if Jack and I are to throw rice and slippers.

Ever your loving old

MOLLY.

THE END



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